

HORMEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Hormead Parish Council Meeting Tuesday 17 June 2014 at 8pm in the Meads Pavilion

PRESENT: Cllr Jayne Denham, Chairman (JD), Cllr Dave Baseley (DB), Cllr Robb Denham (RED), Cllr John Kilby (JK)

Four members of the public

In attendance: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

- 14.124 Apologies for absence** **ACTION**
1. Councillors: Cllr Denis Madden: family commitment
 2. Others: Rev Kate Peacock, PCSO Amanda Higham
 3. Other Councillor absences: Cllr Richard White
- 14.125 Declarations of Interest**
- Cllr Baseley: Village Hall matters, being VHMCM Chairman.
- 14.126 To approve Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting 22 May 2014**
- No amendments having been previously advised, *the Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 22 May 2014 were taken as read and accepted as a true and accurate record.* **JD/Clerk**
- The Chairman signed the Minutes after the meeting.
- 14.127 To approve Minutes of the full Parish Council Meeting 22 May 2014**
- No amendments having been previously advised, *the Minutes of the full Parish Council Meeting on 22 May 2014 were taken as read and accepted as a true and accurate record.* **JD/Clerk**
- The Chairman signed the Minutes after the meeting.
- 14.128 To approve Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting 9 June 2014**
- The Clerk apologised that he had not been able to prepare the draft Minutes in time to be posted with the Agenda. Their approval would therefore be deferred until the July Parish Council meeting. **Clerk**
- 14.129 Casual Vacancy**
- Two applications for co-option were presented to the Council and councillors were given time to assess the merits of both applicants from the details they had provided. The Chairman then said there would be a vote for each candidate in alphabetical order. Marty Kilby was proposed, but was not seconded. The Chairman therefore moved to Teresa Marks who being proposed, seconded and voted for by a majority, it was **RESOLVED that Teresa Marks be co-opted as a member of Hormead Parish Council.**
- Teresa Marks duly signed her Acceptance of Office, was given a DPI form to complete and was given a set of Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and a copy of the Good Councillor Guide, 4th ed. Cllr Marks then joined the meeting. **TM
Clerk**
- 14.130 Police Report**
- The Clerk read a report sent by PCSO Amanda Higham which said: Since the last Parish Council meeting there has been one recorded crime in Great Hormead - a theft on 30th May. The villages remain quiet with no current crime spikes in the area.
- 14.131 Register of Interests**
- The Clerk said he had received no updated DPI registers. **Clerk**
- 14.132 Chairman's Announcements**
- The Chairman had no announcements, except to welcome Teresa Marks to the Parish Council.
- 14.133 PLANNING**
- 1. New applications:**
- None

2. Decision Notices

3/14/0789/FP & 0790/LB The Glebe Barn: *Internal alterations; partition walls, doors, mezzanine floor, staircase, window and flue* **DECISION AWAITED**

3/14/0700/FP & 0701/LB Carters Field, Hall Lane: *Single storey linked extension, retaining wall and steps to car parking space* **APPLICATION WITHDRAWN**

3/14/0789/FP The Orchard, Hall Lane: *New stable block and front porch* **GRANTED**

3/14/0251/FP Bradbury Farm: *Proposed stable block for domestic use ancillary to main dwelling house: Amendments to first plan* **DECISION AWAITED**

3/13/0586/FP Stonebury Farm, Hare Street: *Change of use of agricultural land and buildings to open and covered storage – retrospective:* **DECISION AWAITED**

3/13/0984/FP & 0985/LB Gardeners Cottage, Hare Street: *Erection of oak-framed orangery.* **APPEAL DISMISSED**

3. Other Planning matters:

The Parish Council had received enquiries from Sworders seeking the Parish Council's views on two possible housing schemes for which planning applications may be submitted at a future date:

1. A small scale sensitive housing scheme at the allotment site in Horseshoe Lane that would provide low cost housing specifically aimed at those with a connection to the village or surrounding area. Sworders recognised the village's Category 3 status and the OSV3 Policy presumption against development, but believed there might be a case for an exception. The Council had concerns about the impact of this proposed plan on the immediate neighbourhood, including HGV movement along the narrow lane during construction and subsequent increased general traffic, and whether an alternative allotments site would be acceptable. However, the Council felt that since this was only an exploratory approach, intelligent consideration could not be given until comprehensive details are provided within a full planning application, including what would be proposed for the re-siting of the allotments (and it was noted that these are privately operated, not run by EHC).

Note: During the public comments time following Agenda item 14.144, strong reservations were expressed about the scheme, particularly in the context of the Category 3 status of the village. There was also concern that the Council should publicise the scheme as widely as possible throughout the community. The Council agreed to write to Sworders and reflect these concerns. If and when a full planning application is received, parishioners will be made aware through the Council's usual channels of the notice boards, the website, and as an agenda item for a Parish Council meeting at which parishioners will be able to express their views.

Clerk

2. A scheme at Bury Farm, Great Hormead, to convert the Flint Barn into six houses, and the conversion of a timber framed barn into a residential unit. The Parish Council did not have any immediate reservations about this proposal since it did not appear to adversely affect any neighbouring properties or the area in general. However, the Council would give the plans more attention if a planning application is received.

Clerk

14.134 FINANCE

1. The report of the Council's finances for 30 April to 29 May was received (Appendix A)

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Finance Summary to 29 May: | £ |
| Opening available balance 30/4/14: | 9,371.06 |
| Plus income to 29/5/14: | 824.48 |
| Minus expenditure to 29/5/14: | <u>2,898.74</u> |
| Balance available to Council 29/5/14 | <u>7,296.80</u> |
| Unpresented March cheques as at 29/5/14: | <u>323.80</u> |
| Bank balance reconciled with statement #360, 29/5/14 | <u>7,620.60</u> |

It was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Accounts Statement be accepted.**

Clerk

An accounts summary is published each month in the Minutes on the website.

2. The list of orders for payment was presented for authorisation to be signed (Appendices B1 and B2).

With regard to the Earthworms invoice, the Clerk said they were insistent that the invoice related to the work carried out against their cutting schedule, which was the same as last year. Cllr Baseley said he had spoken to them and was told that the grass was growing exceptionally fast this year due to the warm, damp weather; the only way to bring the whole field back to its former condition would be to cut it weekly rather than every fortnight. It was agreed the Clerk would monitor the situation and speak to Earthworms about resolving the problem with some extra cuts if necessary. The Clerk reminded Council that the cricket club had been very complimentary about the pitch preparation.

Clerk

The Clerk explained to the Council that, after some negotiation, Zurich's quoted annual premium had been reduced from £1,572.11 to £889.92, which he had accepted. Hence Zurich's premium in the list of payments was considerably lower than the quote reported at the Council's May meeting.

It was **RESOLVED to approve all the invoices presented for payment.**

Clerk

Cheques were signed at the end of the meeting.

3. There was a discussion regarding the approval and signing of the Annual Audit and whether it was right for the Internal Auditor to include the Council Tax Support Grant with the Precept. The Clerk said it was because the Grant had been added to the Precept and paid as a single amount by East Herts; the figure therefore reflected the bank statements and accounts. The Clerk emphasised that the Annual Return must be signed and submitted to BDO by 30th June; however, he said he would check this detail with BDO before submission. The Clerk also noted that BDO had confirmed the Internal Auditor was correct in leaving the Total Fixed Assets figure unchanged from previous years, even though the insurer's valuation is considerably higher. The reason being that any change to the Fixed Assets value would indicate the disposal or acquisition of assets. Following further discussion and a vote of 3:1 it was **RESOLVED to approve and sign Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Return.**

Clerk

JD/Clerk

4. Councillors received a draft of revised Financial Regulations for consideration at the July council meeting. The current Financial Controls and Risk Assessment procedures were considered it was **RESOLVED to approve and sign as satisfactory the current Financial Controls and Risk Assessment procedures.**

JD/Clerk

5. There was a discussion on whether the Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), should prepare the annual accounts alone. The Clerk said that during his three years in post, Cllr Robb Denham had, as an accountant, always prepared the accounting statements that support the Annual Return. These were done from the monthly accounts presented to the Council by the Clerk. The Clerk had no problem with preparing the annual accounts since all the figures were his, but it seemed a prudent safeguard to have another councillor verifying the annual financial dealings. Cllr Kilby proposed that in future the Clerk alone, as RFO, prepare the annual accounts. The proposal was not seconded.

Clerk

6. The Clerk reported that the Small Capital Project Grant of £1,820 had been paid into the bank a few days previously.

14.135 Correspondence

The list of correspondence was noted as it appeared on the agenda. The Clerk drew members' attention to an item not covered elsewhere on the agenda:

- The Clerk affirmed that the FOI request for a transcript of the Chairman's report to the 2013 Annual Parish Meeting had received an appropriate response, despite an allegation to the contrary.

14.136 Special Interest Matters

1. Village Hall.

- Cllr Baseley reported that the building work was progressing well. He reminded the meeting that the VHMC AGM was to be held in the pavilion on 2nd July.

DB

2. Highways.

- Cllr Madden being absent, there was no report.

DM

| | | |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|
| | 3. Footpaths and Byways | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The deadline for representations on the Hornead 34 Modification Order 2014 was 6th June. It is not known whether any representations were submitted. | RED/ Clerk |
| | 4. Website | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Clerk apologised for the ongoing and as yet unresolved problems on the website. The most recent communications with Style Cymru (website host) have not yet produced a solution, but the Clerk sought to give an assurance that a resolution of the problem can be achieved. It was suggested and agreed that if problems persist, the website should be hosted elsewhere. | Clerk |
| | 5. Parishioners' concerns. | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None were raised before the meeting. <i>Note: see public comments below.</i> | |
| 14.137 | The Meads and Pavilion | |
| | 1. The Meads generally: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass cutting was discussed in 14.134.2 above and a course of action decided. | Clerk |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's view was that a visual safety inspection of the play area equipment should be undertaken asap. The Clerk agreed to do this. The Clerk reminded the Council that the annual RPII play area inspection has been booked for July. | Clerk |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Medicott had advised that the picnic table had collapsed (no one was injured) and was now in pieces. The Clerk and Cllr Robb Denham had inspected it and looked probably beyond repair. The Clerk will look at a possible replacement. | Clerk |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stephen Ruff has provided the dates he is on holiday or not available to clean the pavilion. Cllr Marks said she would do the cleaning during his absences as required; the Chairman agreed to help. | TM/JD |
| | 2. Other matters: | |
| | Pavilion wiring raised under 14.139 below. | |
| 14.138 | Revised Standing Orders | |
| | Councillors were asked to consider the draft of a revised version of Standing Orders, based on the latest NALC model, for adoption at the July meeting. | ALL |
| 14.139 | Risk Assessments Review | |
| | Outstanding items for review were considered: | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual inspection of certain electrical systems and equipment in the pavilion had yet to be carried out. The contractor who undertook the wiring and certification in 2012 had not responded to the Clerk's request. Cllr Baseley said he would give the Clerk the name of an electrician specialising in that field. The Clerk confirmed that the next certified inspection of the building's electrics is not due until 2016. | Clerk |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safety of play area equipment was discussed in 14.137 above. | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was confirmed that trees that had fallen in the river had all been removed. | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The piece of railing missing from the River Quin bridge by the Meads car park was still unresolved, no one taking responsibility for it. The Clerk to pursue this again. | Clerk/DM |
| 14.140 | Asset register | |
| | An updated Asset Register will be ready for consideration at the July meeting. | RED/Clerk |
| 14.141 | Neighbourhood Plan | |
| | Cllr Robb Denham said there was no further progress to report since the May Council meeting. Of the Buntingford questionnaires given out to households, only six had been returned. In contrast, 139 out of 304 of the local questionnaires had been returned. | RED |
| 14.142 | Insurance update | |
| | This was dealt with under 14.134.2 above | Clerk |
| 14.143 | Urgent matters received too late for inclusion on the agenda | |
| | None | Clerk |

14.144 Items for future agendas

Nothing further to the matters agreed above.

Clerk

Adjournment for public comments

Following a vote at 9.30pm it was **RESOLVED that the meeting be suspended to allow public comments.**

- Parishioners raised concerns about the proposed development on the allotment site in Horseshoe Lane (14.134.3 above) and asked to see Sworders' letter. They pointed out that, being a Category 3 village, no new development was permissible and the proposal was therefore worrying. Among other concerns expressed was the Council's apparent reluctance to engage with Sworders (which was strongly refuted) over the proposed location on an established allotments site, and the very poor site access along the long narrow lane. The Council reaffirmed its position that it would give due consideration to the detailed plans if and when they are submitted in a planning application. Sworders had acknowledged the Category 3 status in their letter. The Clerk said he had determined that the allotments were not run by either EHC or Buntingford Town Council (EHC having devolved responsibility for all but three East Herts allotment sites to Town Councils) and were therefore privately operated. The Clerk would reflect parishioners' concerns in the Council's response to Sworders.
- A parishioner raised issues relating to the Meads boundary hedge to the B1038 needing to be cut, the Annual Audit, and asked when the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of 9th June would be ready.
- A further comment was made to the effect that the Parish Council should work harder at representing and communicating with parishioners and not get bogged down on minor matters.

CLERK

CLERK

The Parish Council Meeting resumed at 9.48pm

14.145 Date of next meeting

1. It was agreed to defer a discussion on the frequency of meetings until a meeting when all councillors are present.
2. The next Parish Council Meeting will be on 17th July at 8pm in the Pavilion.

ALL

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.52pm.

Signed **Dated**