



Helhoughton Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting Minutes

Monday 13 May 2024, 6pm.

Parish Councillors present: Tim Harris (Chairman), Sean Millard (Vice Chair), Paul Flint, Tim Pinkstone, Melvin Lacey Freeman and Tom FitzPatrick (County Counillor). Also in attendance: Jodie Bond (Parish Clerk), there were 11 members of the public present.

1. **Welcome and introduction from the Chairman of the Council**

The Chairman welcomed all those present and explained that the purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting was to hear from members of the public. He also expressed that he would like to unite the Parish Council with other community organisations and try to work together. The other members of the Council were introduced to the members of the public present.

2. **To hear from Jean Freeman on behalf of the Church Village Hall Committee**

The Hall Committee would like to point out that the Hall is the Church Village Hall not the Village Hall. All repairs needed must be met by the village and that is the premise for the hall being available for use. The Church itself holds the freehold to the Hall.

The Committee is currently financially comfortable, this is thanks to the Covid19 grants that were all applied for. Collectively over £20,000 was awarded.

At present there is over £22,000 in the bank. A member present asked what these funds would be spent on, Jean replied anything they want or need. The Committee decided that while the Solar Funding was available, they would utilise this instead of using the Hall reserves.

The Church Village Hall is kept clean by a regular cleaner (being paid for 3 visits per month) and a window cleaner. This cost was however paid for using profits from the latest pub night.

The pub nights still run on the first Friday of the month and yoga nearly every Wednesday.

The current Committee members include Jean Freeman, Lynn Kettel, Sean Millard (PC representative), Sally Pilgrim, Dave Overson, and Kit Price-Moss (Church representative).

If you live in the village the hall hire is £7 p/h, otherwise it costs £8 p/h. The hall can be booked for parties or any occasion. It is currently booked around 2 or 3 times per year for larger events.

If you live in the village and would like to hold a wake in the hall this is offered free of charge.

To make a booking please contact Jean Freeman. Thanks, given.

3. **To hear from Jean Freeman on behalf of the Solar Committee**

Jean Freeman started by asking whether there was anyone present that was unaware of the Solar Committee, to which there was no answer. Jean continued to explain that the Solar Committee first started some years ago (over a decade) between NNDC and three parishes, Helhoughton, Raynham and Weasenham. The funding opportunity was initially agreed to run for 25 years, however thanks to Tom Raynham this was recently renegotiated and extended for a further 40 years...expiry will be around 36 years from now.

The Committee's activities are monitored by Bluefields and the rules state that funds are not permitted to be awarded to churches, schools or another charity. Funds may not be used for profit making and is for the benefit of the parishioners in the village.

Any individual or group can apply but may only apply once per year and must meet the criteria.

This year the Committee has awarded just over £7000 on new play area work and equipment.

They received £11901 last year, and if the funds are not all spent within 2 years it goes back to Bluefields, Funds usually arrive in May, but it has been as late as July.

There is currently £10,361 in the bank, with payments pending for £1666 (new tables for church hall), £260 (community barn dance). An application has been granted for a summer afternoon tea on 20th July. Last year approx. £21,000 was spent on the Church Hall roof and windows.

The current Committee members are Jean Freeman, Sean Millard, Steve Mack, Judy Woodhouse, Dave Kettle, Dave Overson.

A member of the public asked what the democratic process was for electing the Committee members, Jean responded that initially Parish Councillors were required, however after approx. 3 years they advised that this was no longer compulsory and the Committee members vote on new members. There are 6 members permitted.

A member of the public asked where the minutes of meetings were published and details of the applications.

The Committee only meets if an application is received, minutes are circulated to Committee members. Details of the applications and vacancies are published in the local newsletter.

If a meeting is set applications must be received at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting to be considered. Cllr Harris suggested that minutes and the application form could be published on the new Parish Council website for ease and accessibility for members of the public, to which Jean agreed, however the applications must still be completed in hard copy and delivered to Jean Freeman, copies of the application form may also be obtained from Jean. Thanks and a round of applause was given to Jean.

4. To hear from Rozzi Freeman on behalf of the Friends of Helhoughton Playground

Rozzi announced that the new gates and swing have been installed and the willow dens have been pruned, thanks to Bridget.

A volunteer usually washes the swings on a regular basis and waters the plants, however the volunteers and playground members have decided to step down.

The outstanding work including lifting and cleaning/repairing the rubber matting will still need to be monitored and remedied as and when, in line with the ROSPA recommendation.

The grass needs to be cut much lower and the weeds need to be sprayed along the fence line, as this has been raised by more than one person. The Parish Council will instruct the grass cutters accordingly. The access gate needs a new lock, and it was agreed that a combination lock would be the best solution. A note will be added to the newsletter recruiting volunteers to take on the friends of Helhoughton playground. The Chairman wished to thank all members of the group, on behalf of the Parish Council and community, for all their hard work and support over the years.

5. To hear from David Fox on behalf of All Saints Church

David firstly highlighted that the PCC members include himself, Libby, Claire, Vicky, Kit and Mark.

Congregation

Many of the recent congregation are coming from East and South Raynham.

The annual meeting will be held next Sunday at 11.15am on the church following the service. They have a priest every third Sunday of the month, but negotiations are continuing with regards to having a full time Priest. The PCC must be able to show more financial credibility before the Diocese considers a full time Priest. Somewhere in the region of £30,000 would be needed to keep a Priest, in a temporary arrangement for 2-3 years. The PCC would not be funding this in full but need to show they can contribute.

Building

Work is needed on the tower, roof and guttering. Realistically this job is beyond the means of the local people, as around £500k worth of grants will need to be applied for. The PCC would like some help putting grant applications together.

Churchyard

The churchyard is a closed churchyard and is maintained by the Parish Council, to which David wished to extend his thanks. The two large horse chestnut trees were diseased and so were removed, but the fungus is hopefully working its way out, so this will be monitored. Some people have asked for the remaining tree to the front to be removed and replaced with another native species. The grass cutting needs to be shorter, but some areas would benefit from being left longer. The cutting plan will be agreed after this meeting and the PC will take the request to the grass cutter. The PCC invited the Diocese approved church survey wildlife trust to come and assess what species there are, but this will be some time next year. A grant could be submitted from the PC for new trees in the church yard. David would welcome anyone to use the churchyard at any time.

6. To hear from Tim Harris with the Parish Council Chairman's report

The Chairman gave a brief overview of the past year and highlighted what the Parish Council is responsible for, such as the streetlights, the church yard, cemetery and other open spaces, grass cutting, and commenting on planning applications. The bills have been paid, contracted a grass cutter and responded to 9 planning applications. We have a SAM2 which is managed to Rob Lodge and Richard Tree. The Chairman wished to give thanks to them both for their continued help. Extracting data is a challenge but most of the data showed that most people are keeping to our speed limits. However, the highest speed recorded was 80mph. Generally, the police won't get involved unless there is a change in the speed. We've discussed the ongoing flooding issues, and we have been promised a long-term solution for the bridge on Station Road. In the churchyard we plan to remove all the brambles growing up over the graves in October, with the help of FACT, and install some nest boxes for sparrows.

Tom Raynham has agreed to remove the brambles after cutting from the Churchyard. Thanks, given.

A new Parish Council website was set up. The annual budget was set, the annual income is mostly from the precept, (which is the allocated part of council tax) last year the precept was £8200. The only other income is from the cemetery, which was just over £1000 last year. We've maintained our reserves even during these tough times, this has covered grass cutting, which increased, the LED lights help but electricity is high, the play area equipment and insurance, among other things.

In closing the Chairman would like to thank his fellow Councillors, three of them newly elected last year and asked for any questions.

Lynn Kettel proposed that the hall hire for Parish Council meetings be waived, in an effort to help reduce expenses. This will be taken back to the Church Hall Committee for consideration. Thanks, given.

7. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2023

The minutes were approved without amendment and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

8. AOB

There was none.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

Signed by Chairman: Date: