

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HUTTON HENRY PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 12 APRIL 2021**

Present: Councillors Mrs J Thomas (Chair), K Knight (Vice-Chair), Mrs M Farry, Mrs J Grieves, Mrs N Wood, Mr K Lawson, Mr J Manchester and J Collins.

Also Present: 5 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B Drake and Mr F Drake.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillors K Knight, K Lawson and M Farry declared an interest in item 9.

Councillor J Manchester declared an interest in item 15.

Councillor M Farry declared an interest in item 6.

3. Public Participation

Louise Allen from Durham Digital discussed the YouFibre scheme vouchers – leaflets of which have been delivered to residents. As many people as possible are required to sign up to allow the scheme to go ahead. Louise had previously held a Zoom community call and would be happy to hold another in the future. More information can be found at www.youfibre.com/voucher and on the Facebook group [Hutton Henry Community Broadband Project](#). The Parish Council advised that this information had been shared on the Hutton Henry Parish Council Facebook page.

RESLOVED Clerk to add information to the website and Facebook page.

4. **The Minutes of the Last Meeting** held on **8 March 2021**, a copy of which had been circulated to each member were approved and signed by the chair.

Matters Arising

Allotments

Councillor Farry questioned the request for allotment No9 to keep ducks as she felt ducks were not allowed. J Collins stated that it was not stated in the tenancy agreement that ducks cannot be kept. Councillors voted on the matter and are happy for ducks to be kept at the allotments.

RESLOVED all Councillors in agreement that ducks be allowed on allotments.

Salt bins – had been chased up but no response.

AAP funding - £490 was received towards Easter and Whit activity packs. The Council offered thanks to Councillor Farry for sorting the project. Councillor Farry noted that 'The Inflatables' assisted with the delivery – the Council wished to thank 'The Inflatables' for all the support.

Cycle Track – DCC are in the process of internal consultations regarding lease of the land.

5. **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Councillor K Knight advised that he attended a Zoom meeting with 'Wingate Make a Difference', after the arson attack on Sean Ivey's home. It was suggested that Hutton Henry, Station Town and Wingate work together to tackle the issues through a neighbourhood watch

scheme and through the reporting of any and all incidents to the authorities – this can be done anonymously through crime stoppers. Links for the Neighbourhood Watch Schemes had been added to the Parish Council and Hutton Henry Facebook pages. Councillor Farry mentioned Community Guardians – consulting with police and local schools looking to change patterns of behaviour. Councillor knight had spoken to Paul Howell, MP for Station Town and Grahame Morris, MP for Easington regarding the issues. Paul Howell has since visited Station Town and spoke to residents regarding the issues.

Paul Howell MP joined the meeting to discuss his plans for tackling ASB. Mr Howell had spoken to DCC, the Chief of Police and Crime Commissioner for DCC and there was an issue with under reporting incidents of ASB. Mr Howell is drafting a letter/questionnaire to be issued to all residents asking about their experiences and knowledge of ASB in the area and what the residents want to see happening e.g., CCTV. Paul Howell can be contacted at paul.howell.mp@parliament.uk or on 01325 790580.

A member of the public spoke about the ASB they have experienced on a regular basis as residents of Station Town e.g., doors kicked in, cars set on fire etc. Police are always contacted however they have been told nothing can be done.

Richard Sanderson, creator of the Facebook page 'Wingate Community Group', discussed his goal to eradicate ASB with the reintroduction of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. He explained how this is currently operating in Wingate. Richard wants to see the "barrier" between Wingate and Station Town broken down. The Neighbourhood Watch scheme allows people to report anonymously. Councillor Knight requested that posts from the 'HHPC' Facebook page and the 'Hutton Henry Have Your Say' page be posted on the Wingate page to allow for a wider audience. Posters and leaflets are being produced which can be distributed to the villages.

Other suggestions for dealing with the issues included encouraging young people to get involved in sport and the building of a park in Station Town. It was noted that the bike track is going to be a dirt track and therefore the young people will need to take ownership to look after it. Councillor Manchester has spoken to residents of Station Town and it was suggested that the land behind Milbank, where Margaret Beaston's shop used to be, would work for a park. It was mentioned that trees had been planted there previously but were vandalised. The Council want a park in Station Town but it needs to be taken care of by the community.

Councillors suggested a consultation/open day with all residents regarding the issues and how they would like to see the issues tackled, inviting along MP's, the Police etc. Councillors also suggested a poll on Facebook too for those who don't attend.

RESLOVED the council will produce a Parish Plan – to be added to the June agenda. Clerk to send Paul Howell links/details of future meetings.

6. Correspondence

Paul from Church Street Allotments advised that the quote from Northumbrian Water to install the water supply was £1118.00 and would the Parish Council agree to pay or contribute to the fee. All councillors agreed that the allotments were great for the community and that they would be happy to pay the full amount. Derek Richardson, Chair of the association joined the meeting and was extremely grateful for the Parish's support. He offered to assist in any way he could e.g., food bank donations, harvest festivals etc. Derek also advised that they were in the process of negotiating to obtain more land for a possible further 15 allotments.

RESLOVED the council agreed to pay the amount in full.

7. Planning Proposals

DM/21/00640/VOC Variation of Condition 1 of Planning Permission DM/19/03038/RM to include a single storey rear extension at Land to The West of Eden Cottage, Station Town

RESLOVED that no objections be made.

8. Cemetery Report

Councillor Thomas stated that the cemetery is looking amazing. Councillor Manchester raised an issue with the grass cutter after it had been serviced by DCC – no hydraulic oil. J Collins advised she was not aware of any issues and that all issues need to be reported.

Resolved Clerk to speak to John Manchester (Ground's person) regarding the issue and contact DCC in writing if necessary.

Parish Hall Renovations

Councillor Knight advised that the new door to John's store cupboard had been replaced and we had received a quote for £292 from Paul Elliot to fix the main door – the Council agreed to proceed.

The hall requires painting internally and externally, Clerk to contact Mark Darby for a quote as he comes recommended. Councillor Manchester agreed to speak to someone regarding shot blasting the gates. The aim is to get the decorating done whilst the scaffolding is in place for the roof in order to paint the bell tower. The council decided to retain the colour scheme – black for the doors and brown for the windows.

The Parish have been let down by two roofing companies, only managing to obtain one quote from JP Roofing for £800. The council agreed to waive financial regulation 11.1h (due to difficulty to get three estimates) and 10.3 (value for money). Council agreed to keep all works local.

J Collins advised that Council still have the £10,000 Covid grant to cover the works.

Resolved Clerk to speak to Mark re quote for decorating and Jamie regarding the roof repairs.

9. Allotments

Councillor Knight had been approached by the tenant on block 30 regarding fixing the fence. The tenancy agreement states that the Parish Council are responsible for the boundary fencing and therefore agreed to have it fixed. The cost to replace all the fencing is prohibitive with little benefit and therefore the council agreed to repair the damaged area only.

Resolved Councillor Knight to seek a quote from Gardens of Grace, Councillor Manchester from Castle Eden Fencing.

Councillor Grieves had been approached regarding making the allotments smaller for those who are unable to maintain a full allotment. As all the allotments are currently allocated this is not possible. Suggested sharing through a mutual agreement and possibly have joint names on the tenancy agreement in the future.

RESLOVED that the information be noted for future reference.

10. Finance

- Invoices for Endorsement of Payment

Cheque No.	Payee	Description	Amount
104154	PME Joinery	Joinery at Parish Hall	£571.20
104155	Wave	Water Bill	£38.03
104156	Gordon Fletcher	Audit	£400.00
104157	DCC	Grass cutter service & playground inspection	£985.82
104158	JRB Enterprise	Dog Poo Bags	£164.40
104159	Greenbarnes LTD	Noticeboards	£2,721.54
104160	J Dent	Skip Hire	£576.00
104162	Hand made by Hells	Thank you cards	£12.80
104163	Clerk	Expenses	£84.24
104164	Councillor M Farry	Expenses - Easter packs	£257.69
104165	Clerk	Expenses	£57.50

- Bank Balances as at 30 March 2021

Bank statements were viewed by the chair. Balances were as follows:

Current Account: £140,367.07

Savings Account: £34,795.62

11. Annual Internal Audit Report 2020/21

Consideration was given to the report of the Internal Auditor which examined the system of internal controls that were in place to ensure that the Parish Council may obtain an adequate level of assurances for its activities, a copy of which had been circulated.

The report gave details of the annual review of the internal control arrangements within the Council.

A section within the Annual Return had been completed by the Parish Council's independent internal auditor and in his view the system of internal controls were adequate for the purpose intended and had been operated effectively. The Report recommended that the internal controls within the Parish Council were satisfactory.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Report 2020/2021 be accepted.

12. Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

The Annual Governance Statement ensures a sound system of internal control for the Parish Council. Councillors agreed that proper arrangements had be made and responsibility has been accepted to safeguard public money.

- 1 We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.
- 2 We maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.

- 3 We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and proper practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.
- 4 We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 5 We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.
- 6 We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council's accounting records and control systems.
- 7 We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.
- 8 We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on the council and, where appropriate, included them in the accounting statements.

RESOLVED that the annual governance statement be approved and signed by the chair.

13. **Accounting Statements 2020/21**

Consideration was given to the Statement of Accounts and asset register for the year ended 31 March 2021, a copy of which had been circulated.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts and asset register be approved.

14. **Clerk to the Council – Appointment**

New clerk had been appointed, Lisa Hall, commencing 1st April 2021. J Collins, former Clerk will remain with the Parish until 1st May 2021 as a hand over period. All councillors welcomed Lisa to the role and thanked Joanne for her service, wishing her luck in her new role. Both parties are continuing to meet/communicate regularly, especially as Lisa is new to the role.

RESLOVED that the information be noted.

15. **Grounds Person – Review of Fixed Term Contract of Employment**

The council reviewed the fixed term contract (1 year) which was offered to J Manchester on the 22nd June 2020. All agreed he was doing an excellent job and were happy to offer him a permanent contract. Council to look into the possibility of varying his contract between summer and winter. Councillor Farry asked about staff appraisal, it was decided that the Clerk do an appraisal.

RESLOVED Clerk to contact John, informing him of the news and perform an appraisal of his role. The conditions of his contract to be added to the agenda for June.

16. **Resignation of Councillor**

Councillor Peter Marsh submitted his resignation due to work commitments. A card has been sent to Peter on behalf of the Parish Council to thank him for his service.

RESLOVED that the information be noted.

17. **Complaint against a Councillor – Clerk to report decision of the Monitoring Officer**

On the 30 March 2021 the Governance Solicitor considered a complaint from Councillor Francis Drake concerning the alleged conduct of Councillor Jane Thomas. The complaint alleges that Cllr Thomas advertised the job of Parish Clerk on the Councils website on the same day as the resignation was received without consultation with the other councillors.

The Member advised that the Clerk submitted her resignation on 22 February 2021 to take effect from 1 April 2021. The Member emailed all councillors that evening to advise of the position. Given the timescales involved, as Chair in consultation with the Vice Chair, the Member made the decision to put out an advert immediately, otherwise the Council was at risk of not having a Clerk to take over from the 1 April 2021 and The Member's only motivation in advertising the post quickly was to try to ensure some continuity for the Parish Council. There was never any intention to exclude any Councillor. The Member feels the process has been open and transparent.

The Governance Solicitor has decided that no further action is required in respect of this complaint. The reason for the decision is as follows:

The Clerk submitted her resignation on 22 February. The Member explained that she advertised the post as soon as possible to try to avoid the Council being in a position of having no Clerk from 1 April. The matter was placed on the agenda for the next scheduled Council meeting and the Member clearly intended to consult with her fellow Councillors. It seems reasonable to put the job on the website to encourage applicants to come forward as soon as possible, particularly when the job was due to be discussed by the Council before any assessment or selection process took place.

The Complainant asked for confirmation of when staff annual reviews take place and sight of all employment contracts. The standing orders state: 18. g) Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records referred to in standing orders 18(e) and (f) above if so justified. As the Complainant has no line management responsibility, he is not entitled to see the documents.

The Complainant asked for the recruitment process be suspended and an Interim Chair to be appointed to oversee the recruitment process. There is nothing in the rules to suggest that the Chair should not deal with the recruitment process and so there was no requirement for an Interim Chair. There was no need to delay recruitment, as full Council approved the recruitment process before any decisions were made.

RESLOVED that the information be noted.

18. **Parish Issues**

a) Planters

Three tenders went out only one came back from Gardens of Grace - £2589.50 for the planters (Floral Fountain Planter) and delivery is 4 to 5 weeks. The initial set up cost is £156.25 per planter and to change the flowers summer to winter is £114 per planter.

b) Any other issues Councillors wish to raise at the meeting

Meetings

Councillor Manchester raised the issue of when face to face meetings would return. J Collins advised that the current regulations run out on the 7th May and we are awaiting a response. Due to social distancing, HHPC would need a different venue as the Parish Hall is too small – Hutton Henry Community Association was suggested as a suitable alternative. The government are still suggesting to stream meetings for members of the public however the Council do not have access to WIFI – Councillor Manchester suggested getting a WIFI Dongle. Councillor Wood commented that if it is safe for the Council to meet then it would be safe for members of the public given social distancing guidelines were adhered to.

RESLOVED that the information be noted.

Social Media

Councillor Wood asked that the social media policy be re-issued to all Councillors after being accosted in the Fish Shop by a member of the public regarding social media not being used in a positive way. Councillor Wood read out comments which had been made on the 'Action for Station Town' Facebook page. Councillor Wood stated it was unprofessional for members of the Council to be posting on social media rather than speaking to the Council directly regarding any concerns. One issue raised was that of the Christmas lights, all Councillors agreed that this had been discussed previously and Councillor Drake agreed to further researching costs. J Collins advised that following the elections training would be available for new and existing Councillors. 'The Action for Station Town' group have done fantastic work in setting everything up set and the Council want to work closely with them to assist where possible. The Council have already agreed to fund two projects – football and arts and crafts.

RESLOVED that the Clerk re-issue the social media policy to all Council members.

19. **Any Additional Urgent Items of Business**

a.) Cheque signatories

J Collins had started the process of removing herself and other Councillors from the account and adding L Hall. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to have more members of the council as signatories. It was agreed that Councillors Wood and Farry would be added. The Clerk is also going to looking into performing bank transfers.

RESLOVED Clerk to add Councillors Wood and Farry to the account as signatories.

b.) Whatsapp Group

Councillor Farry suggested it would be useful to set up a Parish Council Whatsapp group as it is a long time between meetings. The Council agreed this was a good idea.

RESLOVED Clerk to email all Councillors and confirm mobile phone numbers.

c.) Land Behind the Plough

Councillor Knight mentioned the land at the back of the Plough. He had spoken to one of the residents about the land at the back of the Plough. They were concerned as another resident had cut down hedges and planted flowers etc. What was once the wildlife part has now been turned into a garden. Councillor Knight reiterated that the land came under section 45 of the Council Protection Act. The resident stated he would make a complaint against Councillor Knight – Councillor Knight wanted to make the Council aware. Councillor Grieves had also spoken to the residents and they suggested that a tree be planted on the land e.g. a Cherry Tree. Councillor Grieves had spoken to Gary Shears who suggested that HHPC write a letter to DCC. J Collins stated that the land is common land and as long as what was being done improves the area then DCC won't get involved. It has already been established through the land registry that the resident cannot claim the land.

RESLOVED that the information be noted.

d.) Email Address Query

Councillor J Grieves questioned who had received the email regarding the resignation, Beryl Brown is listed. J Collins noted that it was Beryl Drake.

RESLOVED that the information be noted.

e.) CiLCA and ILCA

L Hall, Clerk asked about starting CiLCA and ILCA – all councillors agreed that this should start ASAP and the Council have offered an extra two hours per week to the Clerk until the qualification is complete.

RESLOVED Clerk to contact CDALC and make arrangements.

Chair, Councillor J Thomas announced that she had not stood for re-election and that this would be her final meeting as a member of the Parish Council. All Councillors thanked Councillor Thomas for her service and wished her luck with the future. The Council had sent flowers and Jewellery as a thank you for Councillor Thomas's service.