

MINUTES FOR THE HOPTON PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ON 13.1.21

There was a presentation by a local resident about progress concerning Fibre To The Premises: In brief, it was established that there were nearly 50 voucher pledges from the village. Openreach is carrying out a survey and will come up with a price to install FTTP within 28 days. Superfast Staffordshire (SS) is facilitating. Some residents are concerned that they will not be able to take advantage of all of the grants on offer because their "official" broadband speed is just above the qualifying threshold. However, SS has said that if residents can prove that the speed is 30.5 or below, they will be accommodated. N.B. FTTP = Fibre To The Premises

Public Participation: Two members of the public were present and a third one joined the meeting later on

Present: Cllr Gilbert (Chair), Cllr Brindley, Cllr Rogers and Cllr Wood

- 21/1 To receive apologies:** apologies were received from Cllr Brown-Bullivant, Cllr Turner, Borough Cllr Harp and County Cllr Francis. Borough Cllr Beatty sent in a written report
- 21/2 To receive Declarations of Interest:** no Declarations were received
- 21/3 To consider Requests for Dispensations:** no requests were received
- 21/4 To consider and agree the minutes of the ordinary meeting on 25.11.20:** it was RESOLVED to agree the minutes. PROPOSED by Cllr Gilbert. SECONDED by Cllr Rogers
- 21/5 To consider the Clerk's report:** The Clerk's report was considered, following the order of the agenda
- 21/6 To consider an update by a Borough Councillor:** no Borough Councillor was present. However, Cllr Beatty had sent in a written report and this had been circulated before the meeting. It was decided to ask the other Borough Councillor and the County Councillor to do the same in the future if they cannot attend a meeting. The Clerk to circulate the reports.
- 21/7 To consider an update by a County Councillor:** No County Councillor was present
- 21/8 To consider an update on the progress of the Lease which the parish council will offer the village hall committee and next steps:** The Clerk went through the lease and some minor adjustments were made. It was then considered that the Lease, in this draft form, could be offered to the Hopton Village Hall CIO for their consideration, informally
- 21/9 To consider an update on speeding and overgrown hedges on Wilmore Hill Lane and two gullies which flooded recently even though they had been jetted:** this item was not considered at the meeting as time was short and there were a lot more items to come. However, following a village walkabout with two local residents and a representative of Highways, that representative has sent a report to the council concerning future actions and that report features at the end of these minutes.
- 21/10 To consider increasing Public Participation from 10 mins to 20 mins.:** deferred until 3.2.21
- 21/11 To consider if the council wants to have a monthly E-newsletter and if so, to consider increasing the Clerk's hours by half an hour a week:** this item was deferred until 3.2.21
- 21/12 To take a final look at next year's precept demand:** It was decided to downscale some of the expected payments and so the final total of next year's payments went from £39,000 to

£37,990. This latter sum will be Hopton and Coton Parish Council's Precept demand for 21/22. A copy of next year's budget follows these minutes. The Clerk was asked to give a breakdown of the £1,000 which will be required for next year's ICT and Website expenses.

- 21/13 To consider the tendering process for next year's grass cutting in the parish:** although there was not time to consider this item at the meeting, Councillors have made it clear that there must be a tendering process with more than one firm expected to put in a quote.
- 21/14 To consider the proposal that if Borough Councillors and the County Councillor cannot attend a parish council meeting, they should send in a written report which the Clerk can read out:** Borough Councillor Beatty had already sent in a report and it was considered that this should set the trend. The Clerk to ask the other two Councillors to do this.
- 21/15 To note the training that the Clerk has recently received:** The Clerk's Report enumerates the training
- 21/16 To consider a progress report concerning obtaining a business credit card:** the Clerk is still sorting this out
- 21/17 To consider planning application 20/33422/ADV at the Beaconside Health Centre and Cornwell's Chemist – illuminated signs advertising services:** Although there was not time to discuss this issue, Cllrs had already been circulated with details of the application and no-one objected. The Clerk has written to the Planning Department to say "no objections"
- 21/18 To consider ratifying updates on both Standing Orders and Financial Regulations:** deferred
- 21/19 To consider the analysis of the Local Needs Survey, the next steps in light of the results and where to publish those results:** This item was deferred until 3.2.21
- 21/20 To consider the next steps concerning FTTP including canvassing the people who have registered an interest to find out if they are running a business from home because they may be entitled to enhanced grants:** The Clerk will contact interested parties to see if they have a business registered to their address – in which case they may be able to benefit with government and local authority support.
- 21/21 To consider the annual insurance renewal documents prior to renewal:** The Clerk is to sort this out, replying to the questions already asked by the insurance company, prior to renewal
- 21/22 To consider an update on the Bovis Homes Estate:** Cllr Wood said that there has been no change since the last council meeting i.e., things were still as bad. SDL has had difficulty in producing and distributing the minutes. Although it was decided to have a Steering Group during the pre-Christmas meeting with residents, this group has not started yet. Residents get no response from SDL. This means that they haven't received a breakdown of bills already received, that many have asked for. SDL (the property management company) is levying a charge of £350 for an information pack which they say is legally required before residents can sell their homes. Cllr Wood said that she has been doing some research and has identified the fact that SDL is rated as one of the worst management companies in the U.K.

The Chairman said that this situation needs to be sorted out. The problems have gone on too long. The Clerk to report the management company to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

21/23 To consider an update from the Chairman of the village hall committee: there was no time to discuss this item. However, Cllrs had already decided that the draft Lease should be offered to the village hall Trustees for their consideration and that was the most pressing issue.

21/24 To consider an update on the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP): the Clerk is a member of the NP Working Group and she gave the update:

- Everything is progressing as expected, the group having had three meetings up until now.
- During the third meeting group members were given a choice of pausing the NP, stopping the NP or continuing, considering all the uncertainties that exist at the moment with Brexit, The Government White Paper on Planning and the epidemic. Members had agreed to carry on and this decision was put to the council who accepted that, whatever the uncertainties, the group must carry on.
- The NP Consultant has asked for permission to apply for another grant which the council accepted.
- It was agreed what material the Assistant Clerk should put on the web site

21/25 To note the Correspondence which has come in: The Clerk picked out one item in particular and that was a request from a village group for the parish council to provide a brown waste bin at a cost of £36 per year. The Council decided to purchase the bin.

21/26 The rest of the meeting was confidential and concerned the approval of payments, the noting of Financial Statement 50, the attendance of one Councillor and what to do about some impertinent emails sent to the council: the payments were approved, the Financial Statement was noted and it was decided what to do about one Councillor's attendance. The Clerk had written the content of the impertinent emails in the Clerk's Report.

21/30 To consider the date and time of the next parish council meeting: the next meeting will be on 3.2.21 at 6.30 p.m.

21/31 To consider the date and time of Village Hall Meeting 16: this was not decided as the Clerk said that she needed more time to research the possibility of replacing the portacabin.

Payments approved:

£96.00	Printing of FTTP banner, flyers and posters
£240.00	External Audit
£884.19	Payment to HMRC – tax on three months' salaries
£30.00	Training webinar
£90.07	Envelopes and stamps for sending out FTTP letter to residents
£31.44	One month's internet
£995.54	End of December salaries
£70.00	Petty cash (30-admin, 40-cleaning)
£240.00	Website hosting for one year
£134.10	Fire extinguisher inspection and replacement (of one extinguisher)
£2.52	Royal Mail – Freepost charges
£2,355.00	Unspent grant monies

The letter sent to the two residents who showed the representative from Highways around:

Thank you to both yourself and Richard for showing me around Hopton this week.

Firstly I have measured the width of the carriageway and there is approximately just under 1 foot that is covered in mud that you highlighted to me. Whilst there are benefits of sweeping this up, we will need to programme this in line with the rest of the priorities throughout the County. I have raised a report with the inspector to get a job raised to ask if this will be cleared but I cannot provide an exact date for when this will occur. I have attached your email to the report so you will be made aware of the work that takes place. As you have mentioned the main priority recently is trying to manage the flooding we have experienced. The location in front of the village green is still planned to be completed by April if everything goes according to plan.

The issues with the surface dressing has been raised with the team to investigate any potential repairs that can be undertaken. This work predominately takes place during the summer unless there is an emergency category 1 defect such as a pothole that requires urgent attention – this type of work will be carried out by our maintenance team if picked up by an inspector. These will be inspected during the next dry spell and any repairs that are raised for Wilmore Hill Road will be carried out in dryer conditions than we are currently experiencing. Speaking with the team they have come to the conclusion the surface has worn away due to the amount of vehicles using it.

I did offer to add your email onto our reporting system for these works however there are multiple jobs raised in the area that I don't think are relevant to the issues you highlighted and I do not want to send you too many emails if and when any work is carried out in the village. If this is something you are interested in then can I please direct you to our reporting system that allows you to mark a location on the map to get more specific emails sent to you when work is undertaken.

I am in the process of seeking legal advice regarding the overgrown trees. I very much appreciate your offer but I must stick to the advice I gave you previously currently that this section of the carriageway would require a full risk assessment and likely traffic management to ensure the safety of the work force. I have had many conversations with Sylvia regarding this issue but as of yet have not come up with a solution. This has been prioritised through our Additional Investment Programme which is due to be completed in March.

I hope the above goes some way to reassure you that the concerns of residents in the village have been taken onboard by the Highways Team and work will start to be carried out soon.

Have a nice weekend and stay safe.

Kind regards, Tom Underwood