

MINUTES FROM THE ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING ON THURSDAY 9th JANUARY 2020

HOPTON AND COTON PARISH COUNCIL

HOPTON VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr P Gilbert (Chair), Cllr J Brown-Bullivant (Vice chair), Cllr L Brindley, Cllr S Wilkinson and Cllr S Wood plus Mr John Blount, Neighbourhood Plan Consultant for Hopton Parish Council

The evening began with a presentation on how Hopton's Neighbourhood Plan has begun and the various stages that we will have to go through before it finishes in four years time.

Public Participation: six members of the public were present.

20/01 To welcome the newly-appointed Assistant Clerk – Anthony Egan: Mr Egan was welcomed. The Clerk said that there was a job description for the Assistant Clerk at the end of the Clerk's Report

20/02 To receive apologies: Apologies were received from Cllr Rogers and from County Councillor Cllr Francis

20/03 To receive Declarations of Interest: there were no Declarations of Interest

20/04 To consider requests for Dispensations under the Localism Act 2011: There were no requests for Dispensations

20/05 To consider and agree the minutes of the meeting on 4.12.19: It was RESOLVED to accept the minutes. PROPOSED by Cllr Brindley. SECONDED by Cllr Brown-Bullivant

20/06 To note the Clerk's Report: The Clerk's Report was noted following the order of the agenda.

20/07 Borough Councillors' update: No Borough Councillor was present

20/08 County Councillor's update: No County Councillor was present

20/09 To consider an update on previous council decisions:

19/270 To consider whether to employ a tree surgeon to pollard the willow trees on the village green: the Clerk said what the quote was and that £1,000 was budgeted for tree works this year and, so far, £500 had been spent. Since the quote was for over £1,000, there is not enough money remaining in the budget to fund the pollarding. However, on the grounds that there will be a surplus in the parish council account at the end of the financial year, it was DECIDED to get all three trees pollarded.

19/273 To assess progress with the Local Needs Survey: There are now 153 completed surveys. The target is 200 and so we need more to be filled in, particularly from the Travellers' camps. The Chairman said that he would sort that out.

19/274 To consider if the council would like to gain quotes for next year's grass cutting in the parish or whether the current provider can be our "preferred contractor": this issue was discussed at the last parish council meeting and it was agreed that the Clerk should gain a quote from our current provider and then the council should decide if we need to go elsewhere. It has now come in and it is for the same amount quoted in the last two years. Last year, the current provider's quote was far cheaper than anyone else's and so it was decided to employ the current provider for another year.

20/10 To consider taking a resolution to erect a notice board on the site of the children's playground at Bayswater Square in view of the fact that the council has been informed that planning permission is not required by John Holmes, Head of Planning: It was decided to go ahead with the purchase of the board at a total price of £1,539.94p. The Clerk said that she would order the board, get it delivered to the Parish Centre in the Haywoods and get the Haywoods lengthsmen to erect it. She gained approval for taking these steps.

20/11 To consider progress with three highways issues which were as follows:

- Flooding on the grass verge in front of the village hall – Highways said that this can be sorted out (I doubt if they will do anything because they asked the Clerk if water was still lying on the road to which she replied that it was not). However, who would pay for this is not clear as the parish council owns the grass verge. It was revealed during the meeting that SCC fitted the drain in the first place and this drain now needs to be cleaned out. Clerk to contact Highways to tell them this
- Rock fall onto the village green – this was discussed at length with Highways and the Clerk told them that there are now two sites where the bed rock has come away from the naturally-formed wall at the back of the village green although this is very difficult to detect as vegetation has grown all around the fallen rocks. No-one seems to take seriously that this bedrock is holding up the road above, even when this is pointed out to them. The fact that HPC sent a lot of emails asking whose responsibility it would be if a vehicle fell off the road onto the green, was discussed, but nothing was conceded from Highways on this point but what was conceded is that it would not be an easy problem to put right and so, therefore it will have to get a lot worse or there would have to be a serious injury before anything will be done!
N.B. since the meeting someone has been out from Highways to inspect the problem again.
- Overgrown tree roots blocking a drain on the edge of the village green – this will probably be sorted out in the new financial year – it is SCC's responsibility to do something about it.

20/12 To consider taking resolution 1: to transfer £4,000 from the village hall account to the parish council account / business reserve account in order to boost funds for a new village hall and resolution 2: to transfer £239.49 from the parish council account to the village hall account as this is the insurance claim that we made, for loss of water at the village hall: It was RESOLVED to accept both resolutions and the proposers and seconders were the same for both: PROPOSER – Cllr Gilbert. SECONDER – Cllr Wood. Since the meeting the Clerk has ascertained that the best way of making these transfers is by cheque.

20/13 To consider paying for all the times that Hopton Parish Council has hired the village hall during 2019/20 so far, so that the village hall accounts will show a profit for 2019/20: During November Opus Energy took a direct debit payment of £1,369.22p out of the village hall account for a debt which was accumulated over the past three and a half years due to their unsuccessful attempts to read the meter until recently! We did owe this money and we have to realise that, in spite of bills sent that show an average payment of £50 per month, we have actually spent £80 a month during the last three and a half years

The Clerk has done some research and has realised that the parish council uses the hall for an average of 40 hours per year if you take into account ALL meetings (including HS2 meetings etc.) We certainly would not be able to cover the £1,369.22p bill by paying for the bookings this year so far but we would be able to do so if we take the last three and a half years worth of bookings at £10 per hour. The Clerk recommended paying a sum of £1,400 into the village hall account to offset this large payment, particularly since it seems that the parish council will end the financial year with a surplus! It was RESOLVED to transfer £1,400 into the village hall account and to set up a standing order to transfer £30 per month to the village hall account to cover the cost of hire of the village hall on behalf of the parish council, for all of its meetings.

20/14 To receive an update from the chairman of the village hall committee: no update took place because the chair of the village hall was absent and because there had been no village hall meeting since the last parish council meeting.

20/15 To receive an update concerning the Neighbourhood Plan for Hopton (if not already covered in the presentation): Many details had been discussed in the presentation. However, the Clerk took the opportunity to say that the first public consultation exercise would take the form of an event in the village hall, after SBC has produced its Housing Options.

20/16 To receive an update from the Bovis Homes Estate: The Councillor who lives on the estate said that things were a lot better now and that issues are gradually being resolved. For example, some of the roads have now been made up but, although street lighting has been fitted, the lights do not always work and parts of the estate are in total darkness at times. The Chairman said that he would follow this up and mentioned that there is still a problem with no street lights on the Tixall Road on the section going up to the junction by the Crematorium. This is because the speed restriction going through the estates on the Tixall Road does not begin until after that junction. The Clerk was asked to chase progress with this problem that the parish council had already reported.

20/17 To note the correspondence that had come in: there was a lot of correspondence and eight required a response, as follows:

- Email from Steve Shaw at “Power for People” asking HPC to join 27 Parish, Town and Community Councils who have already resolved to support the Local Electricity Bill. It was decided that HPC would not necessarily support the Local Electricity Bill but that we would write back thanking Steve Shaw for bringing it to the council’s attention.
- A letter from SCC Legal Services reporting on the fact that an Order had been made to add a public footpath. The alleged public footpath runs from Beaconside to Marston Lane

near Marstongate Farm, Hopton and Marston Parish. The Clerk to display a map showing this new footpath on the notice boards and on the web site.

- An email from Samantha Nicol, Staffordshire Community and Voluntary controlled school admission arrangements 2020/21 Consultation asking HPC to look at the proposed arrangements for all sectors and to give a response by 31.1.2020. It was decided that the Clerk should forward the email to Cllr Wood so that she could send a response to the Clerk.
- It had emerged in a conversation with Opus Energy that the best date to take and submit electricity meter readings is on the 28th of each month. This has logistical connotations but, fortunately, the cleaner has said that he will do this, for no extra money. The Clerk to thank the cleaner and to forward the details that he needs in order to send a meter reading to Opus Energy
- The email received from Greatworth and Halse Parish Council urged HPC to extend the support that we had already given to them (by supporting a letter against HS2 that had been sent to the Secretary of Transport) by sending a copy of their letter to our new M.P. The Clerk said that she had already tried to contact the new M.P. making a request that she attend our next parish council meeting and that she would forward the original letter.
- Cllr Rogers had contacted HPC to see if a councillor could attend a parish council meeting by Skype. The Clerk had received a definitive answer from the SLCC Legal Department that this would NOT be possible.
- An email from SBC said that the previously deferred planning application for (Maximus) up to 2,000 dwellings etc. was due to be discussed on **Monday 13th January in The Craddock Room, Civic Suite, Civic Offices, Riverside** at approximately 10.30 a.m. The Chairman said that he would try to attend.
- An email from SCC said that traffic regulations were going to be introduced on Dyson Way on the Technology Park

Items 20/18 – 20/22 were Confidential and involved the authorisation of payments, the latest financial statement, the change of use of a field on Within Lane, the recent actions of a local resident and all the implications thereof and the next steps for a new village hall concerning land acquisition:

The payments were authorised. The financial statement was noted and the Clerk said that she thought it would be a good idea if, on future statements, all earmarked and general reserves were shown. There was no update on the change of use of a field on Within Lane. The recent actions of a local resident were discussed and it was decided that the council should write to the resident. Concerning land acquisition, the council discussed the updated situation and decided on the next steps

N.B.1 The next parish council meeting is on Wednesday 5th February 2020

N.B. 2 The next Trent Valley Collaboration meeting is on Thursday 6th February at 10. 30 a.m. in Hopton Village Hall

N.B. 3 Village Hall Independent Committee Meeting 10 will take place on Thursday 6th February at 2.30 p.m.

