

HEIGHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

c/o 17 East Green, Heighington, Co Durham. DL5 6PP

MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20th MAY 2021 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT

Cllr G Blenkinsopp (Chairman)	Cllr S Bremner
Cllr A Holmes	Cllr C Teare
Cllr E Thompson	Cllr L Garner

IN ATTENDANCE

L Dunn	
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020.2021 APOLOGIES

Cllr M Woodward	Cllr M French
Cllr G Lee	

021.2021 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Parish Clerk took the chair and Cllr Blenkinsopp stated that he did not wish to continue as Chairman. Discussion followed and it was not possible to appoint a replacement. Cllr Blenkinsopp therefore stated that he was happy to act as Chair in the short term asked other members of the Parish Council to consider stepping up into the position.

Cllr Blenkinsopp was proposed by Cllr Teare and seconded by Cllr Holmes and therefore was elected as Chairman.

022.2021 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Blenkinsopp took the chair and Cllr Holmes was elected as Vice Chairman (Proposed by Cllr Garner and seconded by Cllr Bremner)

023.2021 CO-OPTION OF MEMBERS

The Council is at full capacity therefore no members were co-opted.

024.2021 REVIEW OF BANK ACCOUNT SIGNATORIES

The council approved Chairman G Blenkinsopp, Vice Chairman A Holmes and L Dunn (Clerk to Parish Council as co-signatures).

025.2021 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

The accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 were approved.

The agenda then followed that of an ordinary meeting:

HEIGHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

c/o 17 East Green, Heighington, Co Durham. DL5 6PP

026.2021 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Lee, Woodward and French

027.2021 RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS

None

028.2021 APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETING ON 22nd APRIL 2021

It was noted that the contents of minute 012.2021 had been included in error and following removal of the paragraph under this minute reference the minutes of the meeting on 22nd April 2021 were proposed by Cllr Garner and seconded by Cllr Holmes and so approved and signed by the Chairman accordingly.

029.2021 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cllr Teare confirmed that the repairs to the basketball facilities had been completed.

Cllr Lee was not at the meeting so the matter of St Michaels Crescent Play Area was deferred to the next meeting.

ACTION: Cllr Lee

A survey of all residents in Hopelands had been done in relation to the options of the new parking bays. The survey received a response rate of 43% with the most preferred option being any / all of the three locations suggested with this option receiving 60% of the votes. 13% of respondents preferred location 1, with 7% of responders choosing either location 1 and/or 2 and location 2 and/or 3. 10% of residents were against any location and 3% of residents chose location 3 only.

Cllr Garner expressed his concern over taking away grassed areas where children play in order to add in more parking bays. Cllr Blenkinsopp explained to the meeting that a planning consultant had been approached in order to advise on the project and had stated that investigations were needed in respect of the tree and the fact that one of the proposed sites was close to a road junction. He is to report back to the Cllr Blenkinsopp who will bring the findings to a future meeting before a final decision is made.

ACTION: Cllr Blenkinsopp

Discussion was had on the footpath which is need of repair at Redworth. Some S106 monies are available to the Council for cycleways and footpath bust the information states that it must be within the vicinity of the housing development so it is not clear whether these could be used towards the cost. It was agreed that Cllr Teare would contact the contractor who had supplied a quote for the Hopelands parking bays and ask them to quote for the footpath repairs.

ACTION: Cllr Teare

The Clerk informed the meeting that the cheque which was written for the purchase of the new laptop had been refused by the bank as they had stated that the Chairman's signatures did not match that on the bank mandate so a new cheque had had to be provided to the supplier.

Cllr Blenkinsopp updated the meeting following his meeting with DBC regarding the land at The Dog Inn. DBC have confirmed that the site is residential and that this was as a result of errors made by DBC planners. Cllr Blenkinsopp had asked about council tax and if, seeing as the site is residential, would occupants be subject to council tax and contribute to the precept the same as all other residents of the Parish and DBC agreed to look into this.

HEIGHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

c/o 17 East Green, Heighington, Co Durham. DL5 6PP

Cllr Blenkinsopp informed the meeting that the Heighington Litter Pickers had stored all of their filled waste bags in the corner of the sports field and DBC had collected them on the Monday following the collection. This new location was instead of them being stored behind the bus shelter on the village green.

Cllr Garner raised the issue of refuse bins being left outside of properties and the takeaway in Church View. Cllr Holmes agreed to investigate with DBC the rules regarding putting bins out for refuse collection

ACTION: Cllr Holmes

Cllr Blenkinsopp informed the meeting that Greenbelt had finally responded to the query by a resident at the Chestnuts regarding trees and had undertaken a site visit.

030.2021 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Cllr Blenkinsopp had prepared a risk assessment prior to the meeting to allow the meeting to take place face to face.

Cllr Blenkinsopp informed the meeting that the Environmental Warden had been approached by both the post-man and a bus driver asking when the public toilets might be reopened. Following discussion, it was agreed that at the moment it was not possible for them to be opened as the Council has no provision to have the facilities cleaned regularly. Following the changes due to the restrictions on 21st June 2021 a risk assessment will be undertaken and the situation will be kept under review.

031.2021 SPORTSFIELD

The planning application for the erection of the 2 x portacabins at the sports field has been rejected by DBC and they are requesting additional information including a heritage statement. A planning consultant has been approached to help with the additional information.

The planning consultant had indicated to Cllr Blenkinsopp that a previous planning approval which had been obtained on 20th July 2017 for an extension to the changing rooms had now expired as no work had been started within three years. However, this approval could be reapplied for and if went ahead would negate the need for the portacabins.

The Parish Clerk confirmed that Fields in Trust (formally the National Playing Fields Association) had approved the erection of the portacabins.

In his discussions with DBC Cllr Blenkinsopp had been informed that S106 monies to the value of £12,871 were available to the Parish Council for improving sports pitches and facilities and could be used towards the cost of the changing room extension.

Heighington Primary School continuing to lock the sports field gates, however on Friday last week it was found that all signs informing the public that the gates are locked had been removed and a member of the public and his family had parked in the car park and being subsequently locked in. In addition, when Councilors attended to help it was found that the lock on the gate had been vandalized again and could not be opened with the key. Damage has also occurred to the fencing to the MUGA and another picnic bench has been smashed and so is beyond repair. The Council expressed concern at the frequency and amount of vandalism which is occurring at the facility and it was agreed that rather than purchasing another lock that the gates would just be closed shut each evening. It was also agreed to investigate the cost of installing CCTV and Cllr Holmes offered to obtain some quotes.

ACTION: Cllr Holmes

HEIGHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

c/o 17 East Green, Heighington, Co Durham. DL5 6PP

032.2021 FUNDING AND FUNDRAISING

None

033.2021 REDWORTH & HEIGHINGTON

There has been lots of complaints on the temporary one-way system in place around Heighington on social media. The general feeling of the Parish Council was that it is not wanted and is causing different traffic issues including speeding on Mill Lane and obstruction of the footpath on West Green as cars which cannot park at the side of the road due to the traffic cones which have been put up are parking on the footpath at the other side of the road.

It was agreed that information is needed from DBC as to when it will be removed as no consultation or information has been given to the Parish Council. A letter will be written to DBC requesting this information and requesting for some traffic monitoring to take place on Mill Lane.

ACTION: Parish Clerk

It was noted that there are to be some road closures on Heighington bypass and there was concern that this would result in an increase in traffic through the village. It was agreed to write to DBC to ask what measures they are putting in place in order to prevent this.

ACTION: Parish Clerk

Cllr Lee had circulated an email from DBC regarding planting trees in memory of those people who sadly lost their lives to COVID-19. The Parish Council confirmed that they were happy for trees to be planted in the Parish and that a site visit would be required in order to determine the best positions. Cllr Holmes suggested that the top of West Green be considered as one location.

ACTION: All

The Environmental Warden is removing all of the old plants from the planters around the Parish and Cllr Lee has investigated the cost of plants from Highside Nursery. Cllr Blenkinsopp had contacted two other nurseries but has not received a response. Cllr Teare proposed that the purchase at Highside Nurseries go ahead and this was seconded by Cllr Holmes and UNANIMOUSLY AGREED.

Cllr Bremner has been contacted by residents regarding the erosion of the Village Green at Redworth and asking if the eroded edges can be filled with tarmac. DBC have been out and inspected the damage and stated that as the area is designated as Village Green it cannot be filled with tarmac. Following discussion, it was agreed to request a site meeting with DBC with a view to getting a price to put a raised kerb in to stop encroachment onto the green.

ACTION: Parish Clerk / Cllr Bremner

034.2021 THE CHESTNUTS / OAKLANDS

Residents at the Oaklands have contacted Cllr Blenkinsopp to ask the Parish Council to request a dog bin on the development.

ACTION: Parish Clerk

035.2021 PLANNING

Planning Ref: 21/00499/FUL – Erection of single storey extension to existing linked extension including installation of roof lantern, rooflights and internal structural changes to facilitate refurbishment – 7 East Green, Heighington

HEIGHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

c/o 17 East Green, Heighington, Co Durham. DL5 6PP

It was agreed that a “No comment due to insufficient information” response be submitted.

Cllr Blenkinsopp informed the meeting of a planning application which had been submitted to Durham County Council for the erection of a clinical waste incinerator and bio plant next to the Hitachi Rail factory. Cllr Lee has asked for a public meeting to be held.

A planning application has also been submitted for Merchant Park.

036.2021 FINANCE

The bank reconciliation for April had been circulated prior to the meeting and balanced.

A comprehensive Internal Audit has been now been completed and the Auditors findings / recommendations had been circulated.

There were no recommendations and a clear audit has been given.

The invoice for the internal audit work has been received and is for £300 (£250 + VAT) and it was agreed that this could be paid.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The annual internal audit report was reviewed, considered and approved.

The annual governance statement was considered, completed and approved.

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 and the accounting statements in the audit pack had been circulated and were reviewed at the meeting and approved.

The Clerk was authorised to submit the audited statements to Mazars.

ACTION: Parish Clerk

037.2021 REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

Cllr Blenkinsopp had received an email from a resident regarding speeding in the village which has been addressed previously in the meeting and also about the proposed changes to the appointment system at the doctor’s surgery. Following discussion, it was agreed to write to the practice manager and ask them to clarify the changes they are proposing.

ACTION: Parish Clerk

038.2021 ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED ON NEXT AGENDA

Restricted footpaths due to overhanging hedges.

Cllr Holmes offered to investigate DBC’s procedure on the matter prior to the next meeting.

There being no further items, the meeting concluded at 8.50pm