

HIGH HALDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting
held on Monday 20 May 2024 at 7pm in the Memorial Hall

16/24 Election of Chairman and to receive a signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr. Robinson was proposed by Cllr. Sargent and seconded by Cllr. Wheeler. Cllr. Robinson accepted the nomination and there were no other nominations.

Resolved: Cllr. Robinson was elected as Chairman following a unanimous vote. Cllr. Robinson read out and signed a declaration of acceptance of office.

17/24 Present and Apologies

Present: Cllr. Robinson (Chairman), Cllrs: Mrs. Amsler, Mr. Drury, Mrs. Pickering, Mr. Sargent and Mrs. Wheeler.

In Attendance: Mrs L Goldsmith (Clerk), Ward Member Alan Pickering, 5 members of the public.

Apologies: An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Ms Dawes and the reason for absence was accepted.

18/24 Election of Vice Chairman and to receive a signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr. Sargent was proposed by Cllr. Robinson and seconded by Cllr. Pickering. Cllr. Sargent accepted the nomination and there were no other nominations.

Resolved: Cllr. Sargent was elected as Vice Chairman following a unanimous vote. Cllr. Sargent read out and signed a declaration of acceptance of office.

19/24 Administration: Fire Exits, Fire Meeting Point, Mobile Phones. The Clerk confirmed that there has been no requests to record the meeting.

20/24 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Mrs Pickering: Voluntary Declaration as the spouse of the ward member.

21/24 Appointment and Scope of Internal Auditor

The Clerk advised that the internal audit function must be sufficiently independent from the management of financial controls and procedures of the Parish Council. The person carrying out internal audit must be competent to carry out the role in a way that meets the business needs of the Parish Council. The internal auditor must not have any involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the Parish Council, or with the Council's financial controls and procedures. The Clerk advised that Mr Lionel Robbins is willing to continue to act as the Internal Auditor for the Parish Council

Resolved: To appoint Mr. Lionel Robbins as the internal auditor.

22/24 Confirmation of eligibility to use the General Power of Competence

Resolved: That High Halden Parish Council satisfies itself that it continues to meet the eligibility criteria for the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) 2012 adopted at its meeting held on 18 May 2023; such Power ceasing to have effect if the criteria cease to be met and unless a further Resolution is passed at the Annual Parish Meeting of the Parish Council.

23/24 Election of representatives to other bodies

Resolved: That the following be elected.

/24/1 Memorial Hall Management Committee: Cllrs. Sargent, Dawes and Wheeler.

/24/2 High Halden Village Events Committee: Cllrs. Robinson and Sargent.

/24/3 KALC: Cllr. Robinson

/24/4 Planning Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Mrs. Pickering

Initials:

24/24 Annual Review of Policies

Resolved: No changes required and to adopt the following policies:

- *Grants Policy and Application Form*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Community Engagement Policy*
- *Equality & Diversity Policy*
- *Data Protection & Document Retention Policy*
- *Publication Scheme*
- *Health & Safety Policy*

25/24 Minutes of the meeting of the 8 April 2024:

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 8 April 2024 be approved and confirmed as a true record.

26/24 Report from the Clerk (information purposes only):

The RoSPA inspection for Jubilee Park and Hookstead Green has been booked and is taking place in July. Halden Heights is holding a Summer Party on the 18 June 2024. Cllr. Pickering has offered to attend representing the Parish Council.

The consultation went live on the ABC website on Friday 10 May and is in place for six weeks -

<https://haveyoursay.ashford.gov.uk/2024-borough-plan>

The Clerk is on annual leave from the 6 June to the 24 June 2024.

27/24 Open Session:

A member of the public requested an update on whether KCC will agree to a speed reduction on Redbrook Street.

A member of the public reported that the telephone box on the village green is in a poor condition again and that the light is now also broken.

A member of the public suggested that the footpath on the village green would benefit from lighting.

A member of the public spoke against planning proposal PA/2024/0604 and expressed concern about the proximity of the proposed EVCP to neighbouring properties.

A member of the public spoke against planning proposal PA/2024/0613.

28/24 Proposal for pitch maintenance

Annual Pitch Maintenance

Members noted that Bournes have inspected the football pitches and have suggested a programme of works to include further scarification works, verti-draining, sand spreading and renovations to the goalmouths. A quote of £8,500.00 has been submitted. Members were delighted to note that Brewmasters football team have had an excellent season and remain unbeaten.

To receive an update on the S106 funding available for pitch maintenance

Members noted that the Clerk had submitted a request form to ABC to draw down S106 funds for the above project. ABC has now approved the request and has sent a funding agreement for £8,500.00.

Resolved: To accept the quote from Bournes for £8,500.00 for maintenance works to the pitches and for the Clerk to sign the S106 funding agreement.

29/24 Proposal to consider a new domain and email address

It was noted that the Clerk attended a webinar on the 9 May 2024 organised by KALC on .gov.uk domains and email addresses. The Clerk explained that a .gov.uk is a domain suffix only for UK Government organisations. The key benefits are that it offers a high level of authenticity and trust to the content and messaging along with greater security processes for protection which is better for GDPR & FOI/SAR situations. A .gov.uk email account can only be used by government organisations. The Clerk was going to approach the organisation that gave the presentation for a quote but has since received communication from the current website provider, Hugo Fox, that they are currently in the process of becoming a registered .gov.uk domain host and should be able to offer this service from the Autumn. It was agreed that the Clerk should obtain a quote to switch to a .gov.uk domain and email addresses from Hugo Fox, when available, and from the company that presented at the webinar.

Initials:

30/24 Proposals for the lower recreation ground area

To consider a draft tender document

The working group met on the 16 April 2024 to look at the results of the consultation and to begin to put together some ideas for the tender document. The Clerk has since prepared a tender document. The Clerk explained that S106 funding from the Ransley and Sicklefield, developments could possibly be used to fund this project. However, the Clerk is concerned that proposal does not exactly fit the allocation requirements for S106 funding. The working group has sent the draft tender documents to Jake Jones at ABC who attended a site visit and he has subsequently approved the draft documents.

To discuss the next steps

It was noted that the Clerk has sent a S106 request application to ABC along with a copy of the draft tender to consider and hopefully approve the release of the funds. Subject to confirmation of the funding it was agreed that the tender process should begin.

31/24 Highways Improvement Plan

The Clerk reported back from the walkabout held on the 24 April 2024 with the Community Engagement Officer from KCC which was also attended by Cllrs. Robinson, Sargent and Drury. The following issues were discussed:

- A request to extend the speed limit of 30mph to Halden Heights: KCC has agreed to look to carry out another traffic survey to obtain up to date speed data to consider as part of the review of the speed limit on this section of the A28.
- A request to explore the feasibility of an advisory 20mph limit scheme outside the school and to move the wigwags from the A28 to the school: It was noted that KCC is currently working on a scheme to make the 'keep clear markings' outside schools enforceable which could benefit the school in High Halden. The Community Engagement Officer will report back on options for the siting of the wigwags.
- Gateways at the new development at Hopes Grove: The Community Engagement Officer has put in a request to the development team to have the gateways removed along with the 30mph signs at the entrance to Hopes Grove which are no longer required. The Clerk was asked to find out if the gateways could be moved to the entrance of the village on Church Hill.
- Signage in general: The Community Engagement Officer has offered to do a review of all the signage on the A28 as it appears to be quite cluttered and is possibly confusing motorists.
- Bus layby restrictions: The Community Engagement Officer agreed to try and assist with the ongoing project to remove the no parking restrictions on part of the layby. Since the meeting the Community Engagement Officer has asked if the Parish Council could carry out a survey to confirm that residents are in favour of the bus stop being shortened. Members discussed this suggestion and it was agreed that the Clerk should advise the Community Engagement Officer that a survey is not required as the Parish Council represent the community and are confident, given the strength of feeling when the restrictions were put in place, that residents would agree with the bus stop being shortened.
- Proposal for a speed reduction on Redbrook Street: The Clerk advised that Woodchurch Parish Council had also requested a speed reduction on Redbrook Street following the submission of a petition from local residents to both parishes. The Community Engagement Officer has advised that KCC do not support a reduction in the speed limit as the available speed and collision data suggest the road is working safely. Recent traffic surveys show that the averages on some of the sections of the road are below 35mph with the highest recorded speeds being around 40mph. KCC has suggested that the current speed limit is correct for the road environment and is concerned that on the sections of the road where average speeds are below 40mph, a speed reduction with 40mph repeater signs may actually have the opposite to the desired effect with average speeds increasing as motorists try to meet the 40mph. KCC believe the average driver is driving safely. Speed surveys cannot now be repeated until April 2025 as there is a road closure in place. The Clerk was asked to request a copy of the most current speed survey data and advise KCC that the Parish Council support a repeat of the traffic surveys when then road fully re-opens.

Initials:

32/24 Anti-social behaviour:

To discuss recent vandalism in the playground

It was noted that a section of fencing around the playground had recently been vandalised. Members expressed their gratitude to the 'Life is not an X-Box' group who kindly repaired the fencing charging the Parish Council just for materials. The Clerk was asked to find out when the next meeting of the agencies involved will take place.

33/24 Footpaths:

Proposal for a footpath on the recreation ground

Clrs. Sargent, Drury, Robinson and the Clerk met with another contractor on the 9 April 2024 to discuss alternative surfaces for a footpath around the lower recreation ground and upper recreation ground. Members discussed all of the quotes received.

Resolved: To accept the quote from Lamb-Latore Ltd. to install a multi-user stone path on the lower recreation ground from the bridge near to the children's play area to the road at a total cost of £10,100.03.

To look to install a footpath on the upper recreation ground area in the next financial year.

Footpath from Ransley Field to the churchyard.

It was noted that the Clerk has walked the footpath from Ransley Field to the school and has sent photographs of the areas requiring remedial works to Public Rights of Way at KCC.

34/24 Capital Grants Application

It was noted that the Clerk has submitted an application for a capital grant from ABC for match funding for a solar panel system for the sports pavilion. The proposed contractor has advised that as the pavilion is not in a conservation area nor in an area of outstanding natural beauty planning permission for solar panels is not required.

35/24 Parish Council Surgeries

Clr. Sargent reported that the presence of a Parish Council at the bi-weekly coffee mornings in the village hall seems to be well received. Attendees at the coffee mornings have been raising concerns and suggestions which will be considered by the Parish Council. Clr. Sargent is in the process of putting together a rota for Members and the Clerk to attend the coffee mornings.

36/23 Code of Conduct Complaints

Members discussed correspondence from Terry Mortimer, Solicitor to ABC and Monitoring Officer. ABC is seeking information and assistance in light of the recent significant increases in the volume of code of conduct complaints in relation to parish/ community councillors. This is resulting in a significant increase in cost to all residents of the borough and ABC has decided to seek the views and assistance of the Parish Councils to hopefully in achieve a significant reduction in the incidence and cost of complaints.

Resolved: The Clerk to advise ABC that regular training on the Code of Conduct would be useful and that Members should be encouraged to attend some of the KALC Bite-Size online training sessions which cover a number of relevant topics in a manageable way.

37/24 Allotments/Community Orchard

Clr. Drury reported that one plot has not been tended. The Clerk has tried to make contact with the tenant and will report back. More hardcore has been laid to the footpaths and the landowner is in the process of installing a land drain. Clr. Drury suggested that the Clerk investigate the cost of purchasing a water trough to go under the tap to catch spillages and rainwater. The Clerk will also check that the landowner would be happy for a trough to be placed on his land. Clr. Drury also reported that rabbits are managing to get under the gates, rabbit proof fencing has been installed on all the perimeter fencing. It was suggested that the Clerk advise allotment holders to use some of the remaining hardcore to block any gaps. It was noted that the Clerk attended the webinar organised by ABC on community orchards held on the 26 April 2024 and has since submitted an application for funding from the Coronation Living Heritage Fund for a community orchard.

Initials:

38/24 Proposal for a Community Litter Pick

Cllr. Sargent reported that a member of the public at one of the coffee mornings is keen to resurrect the village litter picking team which used to be in place. The member of the public has asked if the Parish Council could investigate the requirements for insurance and cost. The Clerk offered to look into the insurance requirements and reminded Members that the Parish Council had paid the cost of the insurance for this group in the past. The Clerk will also check with ABC all the other safety requirements for undertaking litter picking such as undertaking risk assessments and the wearing of appropriate protective equipment and the correct disposal of items.

39/24 To receive the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ending 31 March 2024

a) To receive the Internal Auditor's Report and note its contents: It was noted that the Internal Auditor inspected the accounts on the 16 April 2024.

b) To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report for 2023-2024: Received and noted.

c) To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2023-2024 (Section 1) and accompanying report prepared by the Clerk. The Chair read out the Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved: That the Annual Governance Statement 2023-2024 be approved and for the Clerk/RFO and Chair to sign.

d) To approve the Accounting Statements 2023-2024 (Section 2):

Resolved: To approve the Accounting Statements 2023-2024 and for the Chair to sign.

e) To set the commencement dates for the exercise of Public Rights:

Said dates are the 3 June 2024 to the 12 July 2024.

40/24 Speedwatch

The Clerk advised that two sessions have been held recently. Unfortunately, rainy conditions continue and have led to further postponements of sessions. More volunteers are required. The Clerk advised that a local resident is currently doing the online training.

41/24 Ransley Field

Carol Jones, Communication Director at Sage Homes, has advised the Clerk that unfortunately Sage Homes have had to delay taking over the management of the homes at Ransley Field, which are currently managed by Southern Housing, until the beginning of June. Sage Homes needed the extra time to get their systems updated. Carol Jones hopes to be able to provide an update on the landscaping works to be carried out soon.

The Chair invited Cllr. Pickering to lead on the planning proposals.

42/24 Planning

To discuss any planning applications received:

PA/2024/0613: Rectory Barn, Greenside, High Halden

Erection of two residential dwellings, two bay car barns, single garage/garden room, associated parking and landscaping.

Members discussed the reasons for objecting to the proposal and it was noted that Ward Member, Alan Pickering, has already requested that the application is called in if the Planning Officer is mindful to approve it. The following response was complied:

Resolved: High Halden Parish Council strongly objects to the application for the following reasons:

The site lies within the historic core of High Halden, which goes back to the Medieval period.

The village green within High Halden village confines is small and surrounded by listed and unlisted homes.

It is a conservation area and a designated heritage asset, therefore, it is of great importance to ensure the asset's conservation which would be in doubt if the 2 residential buildings were to be permitted.

Furthermore, the village church is an important view from the A28. Building any houses on this densely shrub screen so close to the village green would destroy this unique view. The listed existing houses behind this screen are set well back and not visible from the green. Two ponds behind the shrub screen are old, hold wildlife and need protection from potential reduction to gain access to the new houses. Thus our historic green needs to be protected from encroaching development, something that is stated prominently in the NPPF and the Local Plan. We noted that there are a number of objections on the website.

Initials:

PA/2024/0604: The Chequers Inn, Ashford Road, High Halden

The erection of two ultra-rapid electric vehicle charging points (capable of serving four vehicles at a time) and associated electrical feeder pillar.

Resolved: In principle we are in favour but request that the EVCP are sited away from the neighbouring property. We also would like clarification on the access arrangements.

PA/2024/0838: Old Place Farm, Woodchurch Road, High Halden

Relocation of existing greenhouse and reinstatement of garden fence.

Resolved: Support subject to ensuring that the public footpath rights are not impinged.

PA/2024/0658: Old Place Farm, Woodchurch Road, High Halden

Ground level outdoor swimming pool and associated terrace works.

Resolved: Support subject to ensuring that the public footpath rights are not impinged.

8.22pm a member of the public left the meeting

PA/2024/0799: Homestall Farm, Ashford Road, High Halden

Change of use of land to a commercial vehicle depot and open storage yard (Retrospective). Proposed new vehicular access and 1.8m high gate.

Resolved: High Halden Parish Council strongly object to the southwards extension of the land and new vehicular access for the following reasons: The PA/2023/1922 planning application was refused on the 11 March 2024. The new application is almost identical to the PA/2024/0799 application and refers to a permit in 2003, a decision that would have expired in any case. The work on expanding southwards has already begun, hence application is retrospective. For that reason alone Enforcement at ABC should now step in and prevent any further use and works on this land. Homestall Farm together with neighbouring buildings Durrants Court and Blackbourne Cottage are all designate Heritage Assets of high significance and Grade II listed. The freeing and enlarging further land to a commercial vehicle depot will take the use of the land to an industrial level. The development serves to erode the landscape character of the area and by virtue of the hard standing HGVs and the commercial nature of the land use, has a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

PA/2024/0753: Rose Cottage, Redbrook Street, High Halden

Erection of a single storey rear extension following the demolition of the existing conservatory.

Resolved: Support.

PA/2024/0531: Greenluck Farm, Harris Lane, High Halden

Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of planning permission 21/00973/AS for creation of access track to allow for changes to approved track.

Resolved: Object. The owner wishes to change the agreed permit document 100/A3/01A to a new drawing 1302/EX/2023 as specified under condition 2 of the given permit. High Halden Parish Council object to the changes and present 2 further questions: 1) Why is there a big bulbous extension to the track in the new drawing, what is its purpose? 2) We questioned the existence of a caravan in the adjacent field in 2021 and never received an answer. In the new drawing there is now a second caravan, please provide the planning applications for the caravans in the open field.

Planning applications received after the distribution of the agenda: None received.

Approvals:

PA/2024/0492: 2 Maynard Villas, Ashford Road, High Halden

Replacement of timber shed with cabin.

PA/2024/0462: 44 Hopes Grove, High Halden

First floor side infill extension.

PA/2024/0307: Old Place Farm, Woodchurch Road, High Halden

Provision of new garage outbuilding and parking hardstanding.

PA/2024/0337: The Haybarn, 3 Beulah Cottages, Harris Lane, High Halden

Single storey and rear extensions

Refusals

PA/2024/0451: Boniface House, Shawlands Lane, High Halden

Two-storey detached dwelling house and detached double garage.

Initials:

Withdrawn: None to consider.

Other Planning Matters

ENF/2023/0258: Gateway feature at the development at Hopes Grove – see item 31/24.

43/24 Financial Report:

/24-1 Renewal of the Parish Council Insurance policy

Resolved: To renew the Parish Council insurance with Zurich from the 1 June 2024 for £852.27.

/24-2 VAT Claim: It was noted that a VAT Claim of £1,614.92 has been refunded.

/24-3 Data Processing Officer

Resolved: To renew the contract for one year with Satswana at a fee of £180.00.

/24-4 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget:

Cllr. Drury checked the invoices against the payment schedule and it was and it was **resolved** for Cllr. Drury and Robinson to authorise the payments online.

Receipts:

Details	£
Ashford Borough Council (First half of Precept)	16,527.00
HMRC (VAT refund)	1614.92

Payments :

Cheque/Transfer	Details	£
Transfer	L Goldsmith (Expenses)	128.60
Transfer	L Goldsmith (Salary)	807.52
Transfer	HMRC (L Goldsmith)	201.80
Transfer	Barrie Croucher (Caretaker Services)	109.30
Transfer	SLCC (Subscription share)	103.00
Transfer	Aquavale Properties (Allotment paths)	4632.00
Transfer	Mint Fresh (Bus Stop Cleaning)	51.48
Transfer	N Power (Pavilion Electricity)	63.06
Transfer	Aquavale Property (Allotment Rent)	400.00
Transfer	L Goldsmith (Reimbursement sound system)	259.00
Transfer	David Ball (Reimbursement fence repair)	53.97
Transfer	Matilda Mulcahy (Donation)	200.00
Transfer	L Goldsmith (Expenses – to be paid 7 June)	64.25
Transfer	L Goldsmith (Salary – to be paid 7 June)	807.52
Transfer	HMRC (L Goldsmith – to be paid 7 June)	201.80
Transfer	Lionel Robbins (Independent Internal Audit)	105.00
Transfer	Zurich (Annual Insurance)	852.27
<u>DD</u>	Google Cloud	106.00
DD	Hugo Fox	2.99

Balances as at 20 May 2024

Unity Trust Current Account: £7,996.10

Unity Trust Savings Account: £ £59,789.62

Total: £67,785.52

Initials:

44/24 Reports:

/24-1 Ward member:

Ward Member Alan Pickering advised that Sevington port is now fully operational. Ward Member Alan Pickering is disappointed to see that the charge for the garden waste service has doubled. There are ongoing problems with the new general waste contractor which are due to new lorries and blips in the IT system.

/24-2 Highways:

ABC has advised that they will be placing a general waste bin on the footpath at the back of Woodgates Close to replace the dog waste bin waste that was recently removed but that this is not currently a priority.

24-3 Marketing/projects: Nothing to report.

/24-4 KALC: The Clerk advised that the next meeting will be taking place on Wednesday 29 May 2024 and that a new Chairman is being sought.

45/24 Information items:

/24-1 HHVEC Update:

Cllr. Sargent advised that preparations are underway for marking the D-Day 80th Anniversary on the 6 June 2024 and for a summer event due to be held on Saturday 20 July 2024. Sponsorship and raffle prizes are being sought to assist with fund raising for these self-financing events and Cllr. Picketing has offered to help with applying for a Member grant.

46/24 Items for the next Parish Council meeting:

Success of Brewmasters Football Club.

47/24 Date of the next meeting.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Monday 24 June 2024 at 7pm in the Memorial Hall.

With no further business to transact the meeting closed at 8.41pm

Signed:

Date:

Initials: