

HECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Heckington Parish/Community Meeting held in the Village Hall, High Street, Heckington on Thursday 11th May 2023 commencing at 7.30pm.

Attendance:

Chairman and resident - Cllr Mrs J Palmer

Minute taker and resident – Theresa Williams, Clerk

Other attendees –

2 x Guest Speakers

9 x Residents (including 3 P/Cllrs)

1. Welcome and opening remarks by the Chairman

Councillor Mrs J Palmer, holding the role of Chairman of this meeting, welcomed everyone and gave a short Fire Safety evacuation instruction.

Chairmans report 2023

I have the privilege of being Chairman of this Council, but have to emphasise, I work with a great team of people, including our staff, to run what I hope is a progressive Council, we endeavour to be proactive rather than reactive.

Due to the electoral rules, this council have all had to resign this year. We have said goodbye to some long serving, diligent members who take their wealth of experience with them. Sadly, due to lack of interest, we did not receive enough volunteers to stand, therefore there is no requirement for an election. So, we are all on by default now, including the new members which we will be welcoming formally at our May 22nd meeting, when they will all be giving their declaration of office.

The Council continues to look after its main obligations, the Cemetery, Allotments and Library. All of which present their respective challenges. However, I am pleased to report that the library, which is run entirely by volunteers is very busy. The allotments, likewise, most of which are occupied, and have a waiting list.

We have had to spend a considerable amount of money on attention to our many trees. Most trees need maintenance, pruning and general care – if this is omitted, many are lost. Every few years we have the limes round the village green and the northern edge of the cemetery pollarded, for which we receive a lot of criticism, but this is proper management of limes, and they grow back healthier than ever.

The roads and pavements in Heckington, continue to cause concern. I, together with our County Councillor, Andrew Key, have had several meetings with Highways, regarding several areas of concern. However, the potholes which seem to be an ever-ongoing issue are a national problem and we have had some fairly major ones repaired properly this year. This does not mean that we will rest on our laurels, and please, if you have concerns about a particular spot, go onto Fix my Street, this is monitored as to its success or not. So, it is to our mutual benefit to keep using it.

Speeding is another constant source of complaint. Sadly, our volunteer speed watch team have retired. We had a list of new recruits, but due to changes within the training programme, we have not managed to get this coordinated as yet. The Evolis speed indicator on Sleaford Road continues to prove successful, and my colleague Cllr Andy Garlick would say that speed overall has decreased. Likewise, following some very near misses with people leaving the cemetery, the Evolis there has had some marked effect, although not as much as we would like. Some drivers still think they are on the A17.

We now have 48 bins within the village to provide for general and dog waste. There is absolutely no excuse for owners letting their dogs foul on pavements etc and not pick up. These bins are getting increasingly expensive to replace, the last four we bought cost £1937.00.

All this and more from HPC and our precept was only raised by 16p per Band D house this year.

The sports fields have sadly fallen into a poor state of repair, and subsequently, with football and cricket associations saying they are not fit to play their respective games on, my colleague Richard Higgs worked diligently to get a long-term plan of maintenance to bring the land back up to its expected level. This is now a fixed seven-year plan, which we are paying for with Section 106 money which we are given from new house developments. However, there are extremely rigid guidelines on what this money can be spent on. But at least this means no effect on our precept.

We were approached last year, by St Andrew's Church, to take over the churchyard. The regulations say that to hand over the churchyard to the Parish Council, that the walls, trees, and monuments must be in a satisfactory order. However, the standard of the works carried out by the Church did not reach the standard required, for which we had no redress. As many have commented some of the trees have been hacked, the heritage wall has had orange sand mix put in in odd places to fill holes, which is already falling out. We have received countless complaints about both. The cost to put these things right, following diligent research, was to be in the region of £50000,00. Obviously, we could not put this on our precept, it would have more than trebled the Heckington contribution, so we handed over the responsibility to NKDC.

In the days prior to this, we had an agreement with the Church whereby they gave us a nominal fee for so many grass cuts per year. However, we were always pleased to do more than required and our Caretaker was diligent in doing an extra cut, each time there was an event in the Church. Following the numerous complaints received about the length of the grass, we have recently had a meeting with NKDC, who are now going to tidy the grass within the churchyard.

We had an unfortunate incident on the Friday afternoon the week before Christmas. A lorry backed into, and half demolished one of our cemetery pillars, built in 1880, and went off without reporting it. This caused a lot of anxiety as in the short term we had to beg some harris fencing, get a volunteer to collect, and sadly close the cemetery at the busiest time of the year. Over the weekend, a volunteer lifted down the broken pillar to make it safe, and therefore we were able to reopen the cemetery, albeit on restricted daylight hours, due to the nature of the damage. I am very grateful to Richard Higgs, Roger Woods and Dave Long for their support and help during this time. Also, our Caretaker who volunteered to work all weekend.

Due to the conscientiousness of a local resident who had witnessed the episode, and was willing to make a statement, the culprit was identified and our Insurers able to reclaim the costs.

We celebrated H M the Queens Jubilee, sadly a lot of the events planned were rained off. However, the tea party held for the Over "80's" was very well received. The school children's artwork, despite being laminated, got very wet. However, after several months of having them laid out in our upstairs room to dry, we sent them to Buckingham Palace with a letter explaining the water stains and received a lovely letter back. Likewise, Buckingham Palace also wrote to the school.

Sadly, shortly after this, Her Majesty passed.

As the law dictates, King Charles had to be sworn in very quickly, and Julie and I spent a very fractious Saturday preparing the Proclamation which we had to give on the Sunday, unfortunately without any guidance from NKDC, as we were too lowly to be given the information. However, with the help of video of the Proclamation at St James Palace, we managed to perform this on the Sunday afternoon, which am pleased to say many villagers witnessed. I am personally grateful to our Deputy Lieutenant, Charles Pinchbeck, for his support at this time.

The Coronation

Sadly, our bells could not be rung for any of these historic events, due to the fact that they have had to be laid down as unsafe. We have received many complaints about this. However, this is not in our remit, so unfortunately there is nothing we can do.

Due to the lack of interest in events for the Coronation, following a comment from a parent that the school were looking to improve their outside areas. We contacted our Headmistress and having gathered all the facts and their wish list, my fellow Councillors gave their full support, as the school is a very integral part of our community. School called on parents to help clear the debris from previous years, and Heckington in Bloom volunteered to lend a hand, which resulted in some 45 people on a cold Sunday working together for the good of the school community.

The school children again, provided bunting for the railings round the village green and the village hall. The Council bought pin badges for the children as a Coronation keepsake, which Theresa and I were invited to present to the children on the Friday prior to the Coronation the following day.

I was privileged to represent Heckington at the Cathedral Coronation Service on 30th April, by invitation of our County Councillor, Cllr Key. This was a joyous occasion with fantastic music and choir accompaniment.

Heckington in Bloom continue to volunteer to keep the village attractive and are aiming for a higher accolade than the last.

We are grateful to our County Councillor, Andrew Key, who continues to work on our behalf. The refurbished area of the playing fields parking area was done due to one of his initiatives. LCCs contractors are duty bound to do some work in the community. This is done on a joint agreement whereby; we supply the products, and they provide the labour. Obviously, formal channels have to be adhered to gain this benefit, but having followed the protocol, the work was carried out in August at a considerable saving to the Parish. A quote we had received

initially from outside contractors was in the region of £57000.00. – this subsequently cost £18,500. A massive saving and one which has improved the area greatly.

Our District Councillors again try to assist with NK matters. However, we were very disappointed that they couldn't help with the Proclamation.

I cannot end this annual report without thanking people who I work with daily. Being a Councillor is not just a case of turning up to a meeting now and again. Firstly, we all have to abide by the Nolan principles: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. This is the integral part of being a Councillor.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors. I like to think that we have made a reasonably good team. Special thanks go to Richard Higgs, who as my Vice Chairman, has taken over several major projects to allow me time to assist on more mundane issues like admin. Plus he is far better than me at doing in depth reports. Some Councillors have been very active in tree planting and village maintenance...I thank them for this.

We are also supported by some members of the public who deserve a 'thank you' for the efforts they put in to help, whereby without them, our costs would rise significantly.

Then of course there are the staff. Where again proper procedures have to be followed working with them. Bullying of the staff cannot and will not be tolerated on any level.

Andy Ward our caretaker, who does a brilliant job keeping the village tidy, despite some very unpleasant jobs we heap on him. The Cemetery is the jewel in his crown. We get so many compliments about it, and it is all down to the pride he takes in maintaining it. In fact, only last week we had some two hundred people attend an internment, and I lost count of the compliments given, Lastly, but not least, you will have noticed that our Clerk, Julie, of six and a half years of diligent service has gone on to pastures new. Our new Clerk, Theresa, had been with us several months and is learning council procedure very quickly to keep us on the straight and narrow. Clerks these days are on the receiving end of constant new legislation and procedures. Theresa, having been shown the initial ropes by Julie, performs an excellent job in ensuring that we comply.

I see one of my main roles as ensuring our staff are cared for and treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve. I hope that I have achieved this as they are an extremely important part of the machine that is HPC.

So, thank you. It has been a privilege to work with you all and I hope that this can continue to help keep Heckington the tremendous place it is to live.

2. County Council report – Councillor Mr Andrew Key, Sleaford Rural South

Unfortunately, Councillor Key was unable to attend but did provide the following report:

This has been a busy year as always at Lincolnshire County Council.

I have served as Vice Chairman of the Adults and Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. Really important issues come before us including reports from the Director of Public Health and the massive challenges and changes to Adult Social Care. It is a huge, complex subject area.

I also sit on the Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee covering diverse areas like the Fire and Rescue Service, Libraries and Culture, Registration and Coroners Services, Refugee Resettlement, Trading Standards and Domestic Abuse.

As you can tell, just from what I'm involved with, there is so much more to the work of the County Council than just highways and potholes.

Nevertheless, it is highways and potholes that perhaps affect the most residents in their day to day lives. I have a good relationship with Highways and our local manager, and we continue to have site meetings with him and his team in the village with the Parish Council. Going forward it is the state of some of the footpaths in the village that will be a priority for me, and I have already submitted this as a major concern.

I have been successful in helping the Parish Council gain voluntary help from the Highways contractors under a special scheme for works at the playing fields and the school.

I urge everyone to report all highways concerns on Fix My Street as this is the most effective way to get work done. I continue to support and vote for more money for roads and especially rural roads.

I am halfway through my term of office and continue to work on my priority of road safety. I am delighted to continue to support all efforts to improve road safety. I have supported schemes for speed reductions on the A17 at East Heckington along with other locations in my division. I'm delighted that this Parish Council have invested in new technology to alert drivers to their speed on entry to the village.

It has been a privilege to attend special services at the Cathedral for Remembrance Sunday and more recently to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III.

I also deal with requests direct from residents and try to help where I can.

County wide the main challenges I can see going forward include the fierce debate concerning major infrastructure projects that are flooding the county – a new reservoir, many solar farms and other new means of energy creation that can cause a conflict with the equally important need to grow our own food. Being the sunniest county in the Country and one of the top arable areas for food production means we are at the centre of the argument – food or energy – or both!

As always I will continue to work for this village, a village I love, having been here all my life, well over 50 years.

With every best wish to the new Parish Council as it moves forward.

3. District Council Report – Councillors Mr Stewart Ogden/Mrs Sally Tarry, Heckington Rural Ward

Unfortunately, Councillor Ogden and Councillor Tarry were unable to attend.

4. Guest Speakers

The following guest speakers gave very informative presentations and provided useful information about the service they provide and how it works –

i. P/Cllr Mr R Higgs for Heckington Area Voluntary Car Service

My report will be brief. When the Heckington Area Voluntary Car Service began thirty years ago the monthly number of journeys was between 20 and 30, now we average 100 per month. Over the past 12 months we had **1,148** requests for journeys, **159** of which were cancelled, predominately hospital appointments. The **989** actual journeys represent in total **25,491** miles. In order to carry out these journeys you, the volunteer drivers collectively gave up **1,586** hours of your time.

We are always eager to recruit new volunteers so if anyone thinks that they could help, then please see me afterwards.

The HAVCS has various items of medical equipment for loan. It is available to those who are recovering from an operation, accident, or illness. Items such as wheelchairs, walking frames and a mobility scooter are available on a short-term basis. You may only need this equipment whilst you are convalescing and therefore do not need to go to the expense of purchasing it yourself. Alternatively, you can borrow the equipment to see if it suits your particular need prior to buying. You may think that you cannot accommodate a mobility scooter in your home. Well, this is an opportunity to try.

ii. Matt Tancred from LIVES (Lincolnshire Integrated Voluntary Emergency Services)

Matt's presentation covered the history of LIVES, the structure and training of personnel, how it functions as a vital service at a local level and what people can do to help. He demonstrated the amount of equipment he carries to help patients. There is a local team, so if anyone is unfortunate enough to have to call an ambulance, a LIVES responder will often be the first to attend. Matt also spoke about the ambitious new training centre that is being built for LIVES at the Lincolnshire Showground.

The Chairman thanked the guest speakers for attending and giving very useful and interesting presentations. Subsequently, members of the Public in attendance were able to speak individually to the guests which was mutually beneficial to all parties and very worthwhile.

5. Public Participation

No issues or comments were raised.

Meeting concluded at 8.38pm – all relevant issues will be taken forward to a future Parish Council meeting.

Name _____ Signed _____ Date _____