

## **HAIL WESTON PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE PARISH ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 21 MARCH 2023 AT 7.30 PM IN HAIL WESTON VILLAGE HALL.**

#### **PRESENT:**

J Gooch, N Farnden, R Rowley-Smith, S Mailer, O Oldfield, V Bolton, H Morris, and Veronica Bolton.

Refreshments were served on arrival.

Jill Gooch welcomed 31 residents and speakers to the meeting.

#### **Report from Hail Weston Parish Council Chairman, Jill Gooch**

Good evening everybody and welcome to the Hail Weston Parish Assembly 2023. As I am writing this report, I have to say that it only feels like 5 minutes since I was writing a report for last year!

The Parish Council membership has changed this year but we are still at full membership and I would like to thank those remaining councillors and of course Jen, our clerk, for their continued help, support, commitment and hard work this year. I would also like to welcome the newer members of the council and thank them for joining and offering their time and support for the benefit of the community.

I would like to just take a moment to mention the councillors that have resigned this year for their own good reasons. Phil Martin, who took on the hefty load of upgrading the equipment and surfaces at the playing field. Paul Tynan, who was instrumental in setting up the new website. Peter Mailer who worked so hard on the Garden of Rest, as well as being involved with many other projects around the village and continues to do so in his own quiet way. Finally, Jeff Hubble who sadly passed away suddenly at the end of last year. He worked tirelessly, since joining the council in 2018, on all matters concerning Highways and was successful in bidding for the introduction of the mobile speed cameras.

So, for those of you that do not know me, my name is Jill Gooch and I am the current Parish Chair. I am also responsible for keeping an eye on finances and liaising with the Village Hall Management Committee. Since losing the regular income from the pre-school the village hall has become popular with other users, meaning the bank account remains in good shape. So much so, that the fundraisers we have held in the past year have meant that we were able to donate monies to good causes in the village. I am sure Dawn will have more on this later.

Nick Farnden is the vice chair and has continued to work with a group of residents to produce a new Community Led Plan for 2022-2027. The launch is being held for this on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 7.30pm here in the village hall.

Rebecca Rowley-Smith continues to prepare regular reports documenting the condition of our open spaces and any works that may be required. This is an important role that helps to ensure the village remains in the best possible condition at all times.

To complement this, we have also been able to fill the vacancy for a Parish Caretaker. Paul Baker has been busy around the village helping with any maintenance issues and has been a very welcome addition to the council. Paul will be formally introducing himself this evening and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your hard work Paul.

I would like to introduce the new members of the council to you now.

Stephanie Mailer, who has taken on the role of introducing Neighbourhood Watch back into the village. Oliver Oldfield is continuing the work on the website. Hannah Morris, who joined the council last month. And finally, Veronica Bolton who has made a return to the council.

Our County Councillor, Ian Gardener, has continued to attend our meetings when his diary allows. Our District Councillor, Stephen Cawley also attends as many of our meetings as possible. They always keeps us informed of any opportunities to shape consultations and wider county news and their help is very much appreciated. They are both here this evening and we will receive updates from them later.

This year has seen a Jubilee tree being planted at the Garden of Rest, along with the installation of a new bench by Chrys Baker in memory of her late husband John, who was a Parish Councillor. There is a new picnic bench at the playing field that has been donated by the Village Hall Committee and the exciting addition of a climbing wall purchased using lottery funds. The beds at the playing field are currently being tidied and the area around the cemetery gates have been tidied and planted up. This work has been carried out by volunteers from the Hail Weston Wildlife and Gardening Group and a big thank you goes to all of you involved. I believe Barbara Wallis has a few words she would like to say and we look forward to hearing from her in a few minutes.

The Health Inequalities Project has been set up by Huntingdonshire District Council and Jen has been working closely with them to ensure that residents of Hail Weston have the benefit of this great initiative. A survey was completed by many of you and as a result a number of free classes will be running throughout the year in the village hall. One Leisure are providing the instructors as part of the project. The classes are in blocks of six weeks and if you are interested in taking part in any of them then please speak to a member of the council after the meeting or email Jen for further details. The information is posted on the village notice boards and website. There is also a program of activities that will be running for the youngsters during the school holidays as a joint project with Great Staughton.

And finally, it was resolved by the Parish Council at the November meeting to not increase the Precept for the next year.

Thank you for listening.

**Report from CCC Ward Cllr Ian Gardener**

**Report from HDC Ward Cllr Stephen Cawley**

**Report from St Nicolas Church Restoration Group by Anne-Marie Hamilton (read by RRS)**

A lot has happened since my last Report to you just over 12 months ago. We have finally made a physical start on the restoration and renovation of St Nicholas Church after 8 years of intensive planning and fund-raising. As it is such a big project and we are only a small village, we have had to break down the overall project into individual phases, in order to be able to manage it successfully, and were very excited when we were finally able to 'put a spade in the ground' and get everything underway in the first quarter of 2022. We were particularly grateful to Hail Weston Parish Council for their ongoing support - this time in enabling us to gain access to the church through the village cemetery for what should have been a three week period but which, in reality became a three month one as various pipes and other items were discovered underground, and it took some time to sort out what they were and how to deal with them.

With Phase 1 finally completed, (disabled access in to the church), we then moved on to some extremely serious and difficult funding applications for Phase 2 – to dismantle, renovate and reassemble the present south porch over the north door of the church, and the building of a small extension on the footprint of the south porch to house a disabled toilet and small kitchen. We had to obtain a Faculty for this work as well as for Phase 1, and the terms were onerous. In addition, it is extremely difficult to get funding currently. The amount of information required is frankly astonishing, but we were very fortunate as having gathered all the information up, my daughter helped us by writing the funding bids and we heard on 8<sup>th</sup> March, that our funding applications had been successful.

The main reason that our funding bids have been successful is down to the fact that we have received so much ongoing support from everyone in the local community, including Hail Weston Parish Council, numerous local village organisations and individuals. I cannot thank you all enough. At times we wondered whether we would ever reach this stage, but the encouragement, enthusiasm, generosity, and hard work of so many others to help us achieve success has been the thing that has kept us going. There are too many people to name individually here, but we know who you are and are incredibly grateful to you all.

We are currently going through all the funding contracts, checking all the terms and conditions, and getting an updated quote from our contractor and hope to be able to announce a firm start date for Phase 2 very shortly.

Nothing stands still, and we are also holding an Art Exhibition on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April which we hope will begin our fund-raising for Phase 3 – heating and lighting for the church. The Art exhibition will have something for everyone, from original artworks for sale, plus prints and cards. There will also be refreshments available in the Village Hall, and the weekend will culminate with an Auction of 7 original watercolours depicting scenes in and around Hail Weston by Derek Abel (1925 – 2008), plus a large, framed map of the County of Huntingdon from an actual survey made in the year 1829 and published by C and J Greenwood in 1831. These have very generously been donated by the family of the late Nicholas Adlam.

The Auction will be conducted by David Fletcher, the well-known valuer and television presenter from 'Flog It'. We look forward to welcoming everyone to this very special weekend in Hail Weston.

## **Report from St Nicolas Church by Rev'd Nicki Bland**

### **Report from Paul Baker**

### **Report from Hail Weston Ukraine Support by Wendy Baker**

#### History

Our proposal, initially, to the Parish Council, to see if we could support a Ukraine family in our village funded by the community, was met with enthusiasm and an enormous amount of encouragement by the residents of Hail Weston. We secured a 'Community House' in the village with grateful thanks to the Clements family initially for 6 months. Our Ukraine family, Mum and two teenage boys arrived in the village in July 2022. Following a meeting with the Clements family before Christmas, I announced that they were willing to extend the 'Community House' tenancy period to the end of July 2023. This would allow the children to settle and complete their full year of schooling without further disruption and upset and the worry of finding different accommodation. This was an amazing gesture, and we are all so grateful to them. Thank you again.

Our other two Ukrainian families (Mum and 2 teenage children x 2) are being sponsored by residents, the Mulcahy and Milne families. We have worked very closely together to establish the children into local schools, who are all doing extremely well, considering the language barrier. We continue to support the Mums getting work, in the local community and at present all three in are part-time work. All the families have settled comfortably into village life and have become part of our community. They have all been very active in the village to supporting community working events i.e. gardening and litter picking.

As much as the families have settled into a safe and secure lifestyle in the village. Their aim is to go back to Ukraine as soon as it is safe to do so. At the time of this report our community family are undecided if they return to their homeland but they are missing their family at home. They are fully aware they will have to vacate the house at the end of July but if they wish to stay on they can do so but it will then be under a commercial contract between themselves and the owners. They so appreciate the gift and kindness the community have shown them over this past year. There are big decisions to be made but work is going on in the background to make sure we support any decision they take and will continue to be there for them to help them become fully independent, if they choose to stay in the area.

With all the above in mind, there is still an extended 12-month business agreement and exit strategy in place with the HW community which we need to adhere to, as it was set and agreed, back in April and November of last year.

#### 1. EXIT STRATEGY (set in April 2022) update November 2022

After a review with the Clements family in November, it was agreed that our 'Community Family' would remain in the house until end of July 2023. The tenancy agreement continues under the terms of the initial contract.

- i. Community Financial support will be completed and stopped at the end of July. For all those who have chosen to extend

their financial support, monthly, thank you very much, but please make sure your direct debit is cancelled in July.

- ii. The government extended their financial support to sponsors for up to a year, from the family's arrival date.
- iii. The Hail Weston Community Support Group continues to fund the Utility costs of the house until July 2023. We have seen the rising cost of electricity but by anticipating the costs and budgeting plus the family contributing, we have managed to keep the utility costs to approx. £300 to £400 per month during the winter months. They have all electric heating, but with government support we seemed to have got through the worst. There will still be no charge for rent or rates. No further costs are predicted other than for supporting the children with school activity costs or a social activity for all the Ukrainian children.
- iv. All mums are working very hard with part-time jobs and two families have self-funded cars and are attempting to make themselves self-sufficient.
- v. As discussed above, we believe we have enough funds to carry on our support through to July 2023.
- vi. The family are aware they will have to vacate the house at the end of July. Since January we have been working to help them to be self-sufficient and independent with the knowledge they have our support. They very much appreciate the gift and kindness the community have given them.
- vii. There are big decisions to be made but work is going on in the background to make sure we support any decision they take and will continue to be there for them to help them become independent to find accommodation, if they choose to stay in the area or the UK.

## 2. FUND RAISING AND BANK ACCOUNT

- a. The Community Bank Account was set up and the following people are signatories for this. Nick Abell, Barry Easom and Wendy Baker. It is very important that there is full transparency of all income and expenditure, for the HW Ukraine project. (The account was initially set up to support the original Community Plan and associated community projects).
  - i. The account is running smoothly, and all income and expenditure is recorded. This is checked on a regular basis and is fully transparent. Privacy is always maintained and persons contributing to the fund are kept anonymous.
  - ii. monthly donations, standing orders or one-off payments will cease in July 2023.

iii. Income to date: £7927.06. Outgoings to date: £6550.88.  
Cash in bank: £1376.18

- b. Marian Mulcahy kindly agreed to support and manage the project with us so that again we have some balanced decisions!
- c. All funds raised were primarily to support the running of 'The Community House' i.e.: Essential utilities – electric, water, rates, house insurance (known costs). The fund covers monthly payments of Electric, Water and BT Internet. (Rates, rent and insurance, covered by the owner)
- d. We have supported our guest families in Hail Weston village for welfare, school uniforms, essential expenses etc. that were not covered by benefits and grants from the local authority/government in the first 5-6 weeks of them arriving in the village. In addition we supported the 'Community family' with food as well as the above expenses until government benefits were received.

### 3. COMMUNITY HOUSE – Extended to July 2023

- a. The two-bedroom house known as 'The Community House' has been made available for a Ukrainian refugee family, rent free, for 12 months (a total of 15 months from April 2022) and will end in July 2023, within the village. An amazing gift to our community, for which we thank the owners, the Clements family for such generosity. The tenancy remains the same. Rent, Rates, and insurance costs are not covered by our funds.
- b. Discussions will begin or to be fair, have already begun regarding how we support the family to move on from the community house. If they stay, help them navigate the system of privately renting either the house they are in or support them moving properties so we can hopefully keep the children at the same school or if they chose to return home how we support their return if they choose to take this route. Lots of very difficult decisions ahead!
- c. To update you, both boys are doing extremely well at school and the teachers are very impressed at their commitment to overcome the English language, as well as try to fit in with the demands of our school curriculum. The eldest boy has received a couple of school awards and is at present taking lessons with the PE students in school, as part of his first year GCSE work experience program. To add, they are also following an on-line school education in Ukraine, which they do when they return from school and at weekends!
- d. Many of you may have seen during the school holidays, well 1 week into it, that the youngest boy broke his wrist whilst playing in the park. He has now fully recovered and getting back to fitness. Both boys attend the gym, boxing club and the tennis club.

- e. As mentioned above Mum has a part-time job and I believe many of you may have met her in the Royal Oak. As with all our Ukraine families they wish to be seen to be contributing to society to helping themselves in these difficult times and not relying totally on benefits. Our support allows them to make this transition and become independent eventually.
- f. During October half term we took the six Ukrainian children to London by train. McDonalds on arrival. Paul secured free tickets for them all to visit the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden. They then had a wonder around the market and visited a few shops. We finished the day with a meal in Pizza Express which they loved. The whole day cost the fund £25 per child. A lovely day was had by all. Hats off to any secondary school teacher out there. We slept well!!!
- g. Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March, Nick and Martin took two of our families to the QPR football match. What fun they all had and what lovely memories they made as well as seeing a little bit of London via car. Thank you to both men for giving them a wonderful experience. They even got interviewed!!

**Marian Mulcahy wished to add the following:**

Thanks to Nick for highlighting the Ukrainian situation at the last annual PC meeting - having our families has been an enriching experience for those of us who have had the pleasure of getting to know them.

Thanks to those donating newspaper cuttings about Ukraine - to be used as an educational resource now and in the future - we 'kick-started' a more international initiative with Ukrainian refugees in other countries doing the same. This will allow children to appreciate both the support and the opinions of other countries about the war.

Our girls are preparing short video clips about life in England to be used in English lessons in at least one, and possibly more, Ukrainian school(s).

**SUMMARY**

Thank you to everyone in the village for their continued caring support. You have all made such a significant difference to our guests and their families. Every day is a struggle for them, but they continue to smile and try to stay positive. Again, we would like to say thank you to the Clements family who have gone over and above, not only for their physical support with the house but also with the empathy they have shown towards the family during this difficult period of their lives. Also, we would like to say a big thank you to the Mulcahy and Milne family for their personal support to our other two families in the village. The support and stability for the families has been second to none. Thank you also to Barry Easom and Nick Abell for monitoring the finances!

Thank you all for your continued support. Wendy and Paul Baker



**Report from Hail Weston Village Hall Management Committee by Dawn Milne**

**Report from Hail Weston Neighbourhood Café by June Hamilton**

**Report from Hail Weston Wildlife and Gardening Group by Barbara Wallis**

**Report from THE ROYAL OAK Public House by Tony Larkins**

This is just a quick update.

Planning permission has been sought and obtained for converting the storage area at the back of the pub into a more substantial building for storage.

A meeting is being held tomorrow between those involved in the work, which is expected to be a reasonably large capital expenditure.

With regards to general trading.....

I am pleased to say that we have just enjoyed a very busy Mother's Day, and overall trade this year has been very positive.

We are looking to hold a number of events this year, and there have been quite a few groups and clubs that have been established through the Royal Oak. We hope to always remain a centre of the community, which after all is why so many locals put in so much effort to see it re-opened.

It still grieves that the owner of the garden will not sell it to the pub, and that he was unreasonable regarding the continued use of the area of garden we were using last year, but there is nothing further we can do about this.

Unless the parish council can offer to buy it from him for the community, and then sell it to us, with a covenant to protect its future use.

On behalf of the pub, I would like to thank all those that have supported the pub, and ask that everyone continues to do so.

**Report by Nick Farnden - CLP Lead**

Invited all to attend the forthcoming launch of the plan with refreshments meeting on 23 March 2023 at 7.30 pm.

**Residents** asked questions relating to potholes, Coronation celebrations, Christmas trees, playing field electricity supply, bus services, St Neots Market Town Plan, Drains in the village, The Falcon Pub in St Neots and the resident consultation with HDC Climate Strategy.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm