

HAIL WESTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH ASSEMBLY OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON 19 MARCH 2024 AT 7.30 PM IN HAIL WESTON VILLAGE HALL.

PRESENT:

N Farnden, O Oldfield, V Bolton, H Morris, and N Burdett.

Apologies from R Rowley-Smith who was attending a Parish Meeting relating to Kimbolton Fire Station, S Mailer, work commitments and CCC Ward Cllr. Ian Gardener and HDC Ward Cllr Stephen Cawley were both attending another Parish Meeting regard to Kimbolton Fire Station.

Refreshments were served on arrival.

Nick welcomed 14 residents and speakers to the meeting.

Report from Hail Weston Parish Council Chairman, Nick Farnden

Before I report on what had been going on in the last 12 months and look forward to activities in the coming year I thought it would be interesting to do a recap on the role of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council is the lowest tier of local government. It's seven members are elected but do not receive pay or claim allowances.

Our responsibilities include Street lighting for Parish owned lights, Playing Field, Cemetery, Allotments, Garden of Rest, Commenting on planning applications and various consultations. Liaising with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Apart from myself our members are;

Oliver Oldfield - Vice Chairman and Website coordinator

Steph Mailer - Environment

Rebecca Rowley Smith - Open Spaces

Hannah Morris - Community Engagement

Nigel Burdett - Community Led Plan delivery

Veronica Bolton- PC representative on Village Hall Committee.

I succeeded Jill Gooch as Chairman last year. Jill served the Parish Council ably for several years and we have missed her commitment and dedication since she stood down from the council.

We are responsible for a small element of the Council Tax to fund our activities and I am pleased to report that for the second year in succession we have kept this unchanged whilst maintaining cash balances in excess of the minimum statutory level.

In the last year we saw the highly successful launch of the health and fitness initiative with many residents participating in a range of physical activities and better still the sessions were free of charge.

This initiative in collaboration with HDC is continuing with Free Strength & Balance classes until July in the village hall. In the Easter and summer holidays we will see the Wild play activities and exercise sessions for children to be held at the playing field and are free.

The Parish Council are also funding some solar lighting on the path by the village verge sign which is imminent.

We were delighted to secure funds from CCC that have helped fund the solar lights along the cycle way between Hail Weston and the Great North Road.

This project was the brain of Jeff Hubble a much-missed Parish Councillor who died in 2022. In his memory we have named it the Hubble Highway.

The district council are in the process of reviewing the 2036 Local Plan which sets out how the whole HDC area should develop over the next decade and longer. As you might expect it has particular emphasis on house building and residents as well as the Parish Council will have the opportunity to respond to a consultation in the next 12 months.

Many people will also be aware of the proposal to build a new and extensive solar farm south of the B645 and stretching for several miles towards Kimbolton. We have been liaising with neighbouring Parish Councils to make sure we are up to date with the progress of this proposal and looking forward to contributing towards the consultation.

Apart from the benefits of village life there are always frustrations as well. Persistent litter dropping throughout the parish and especially along Ford Road not only damages the environment but detracts from a very attractive part of Hail Weston. Everyone can help by reporting litter to the district council on their website, so they can arrange collection.

Dog fouling has been on the increase. It is an unnecessary problem caused by laziness and thoughtlessness and is unpleasant for residents walking through the village. Enforcement is the responsibility of Hunts District Council who have the power to levy fines of up to £1,000.

If you have something to report please contact the enforcement officer via the HDC website.

Tony Baker has for a decade put poo bags at strategic points throughout the village and we are very grateful to Tony for his endeavours. Karen McGlashan has kindly volunteered to take over from him.

Over the last two years or so Paul Baker has carried out various maintenance tasks for the council which have helped maintain and improve the village.

The role of Clerk is crucial to the successful running of any Parish Council. Hail Weston has been very fortunate to have Jen Abell as our Clerk for over 12 years. She has provided excellent advice to the council and carried out her duties with unfailing diligence, competence and good humour. Sadly, Jen is leaving us following a recent move from the village and she will be as great a loss to the Parish Council as she is to Hail Weston.

Report from Hail Weston Village Hall Management Committee by Ann Clark

The Village Hall Committee has been subject to some significant changes during 2023/24. In 2023, we received resignations from Jill Gooch who was not only our secretary but in addition, represented the Parish Council, from which she was also stepping down. At Christmas, Julie Jaina also left us, and finally, Dawn Milne resigned due to new commitments as Manager of the Royal Oak. You may be aware that Dawn Milne was Co-Chair (with myself) but what you may not know is that she also acted as cleaner, heating engineer and booking clerk. These 3 resignations, and particularly that of Dawn, left us with the significant task of understanding much of the "inner workings" of how the hall is run, but also gave us an opportunity to re-think how we as a committee support the village hall.

We were lucky enough to have Veronica Bolton as Jill's PC rep replacement and she also agreed to be co-chair. Val Moran had already agreed to act as secretary, and thanks to the community spirit of Hail Weston, we very quickly brought Liz Bacon on board as Lettings Secretary and appointed a cleaner from within the village.

The current committee therefore comprises 8 trustees: Officers are 2x Co-chairs /PC rep, Treasurer/Neighbourhood Cafe rep, Secretary, Church Rep, Lettings Secretary plus 2 more trustees

We have an internet presence which is where the vast majority of bookings are taken. Potential customers can check availability of the hall, see our lettings policy before they book and to pay through Bacs transfer. We felt it necessary to remove any personal information from the website, and have introduced an "official" email address for bookings via the secretary.

We have regular block bookings covering a range of activities including NCT, yoga, boxercise, exercise classes, childminders play and voting. Throughout the year we have one off bookings for parties, personal events and community events. This has enabled us to cover all aspects of costs to the hall, although any large improvements have to be funded by our savings.

This financial year we have carried out improvements including cleaning of the gutters/roof, completely redecorating the inside of the hall and replacing door fasteners. A key safe has also been installed by the rear door, so that committee members do not have to be personally available to supply keys. New chairs and a rack were bought in the previous financial year which were such a success, that a further quantity of chairs have been purchased, which has made a huge improvement and we have been fortunate enough to recycle the old chairs via St Nicolas' church and HDC.

This year our main focus will be on the village fete which will be held on the 6 July at the playing fields. Again, Dawn had a wealth of knowledge about the previous organisation of this event and Julie Jaina had also been instrumental in organising our program, so it has been a bit of a learning curve. We were fortunate to be able to recruit some non-village hall committee members to form a subcommittee, thus taking some of the responsibilities from the core committee, and with this new injection of enthusiasm, we are all working hard to organise a successful event. We look forward to your support.

Report from Hail Weston Neighbourhood Café by June Hamilton

The Neighbourhood Cafe was born out of the original Hail Weston Community Led Plan, and its primary mission was, and still is, to give local people an opportunity to come together for some social interaction, and to enjoy refreshments together.

It was originally run twice a month by a small committee but since the Covid pandemic it has run on the third Sunday of each month and organisation has been taken on by a small team: June & Norman Hamilton and Jane Sugars. This year we have been joined by Jo Williams as a regular volunteer. Many other volunteers from the Hail Weston community have also been generous in helping out on the day when we are short-handed and by baking cakes. The Cafe does not receive any external funding, and all the necessary consumables – tea, coffee, milk, serviettes, take-away bags etc are provided by the team. We are extremely fortunate to be supported by several regular volunteers who give home-made cakes, all of which are much appreciated by those who come along to the café.

Over the past year, numbers attending the Cafe seem to have increased and we've welcomed many new faces – from the more senior to the very young. It is difficult to determine the exact footfall each month as we often have people dropping in for takeaways etc and we are always too busy to count, but most months we do seem to need all the tables and chairs we can possibly fit into the hall. We are also happy, on occasion, to see visitors from further afield. For example, in addition to visiting friends and family we welcomed a passing hiker in the summer and recently a man on holiday from Australia who brought his mum along from the Paxtons.

In May 2023 the café was asked to help organise an afternoon tea at the Royal Oak to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III; June and Norman felt privileged to be involved in what turned into a marvellous afternoon with all sorts of activities for children and with many volunteers who brought along cakes, savouries and scones with cream & Jam. A beautifully decorated Coronation cake took pride of place. There was an open invitation to all Hail Weston residents and the event was supported magnificently. We repeated this on a smaller scale later in the year as a thank you and a farewell to some of our Ukranian visitors who had become friends.

The Neighbourhood Café's secondary purpose is to raise funds for local causes or for national charities through donations made for drinks and cakes. We encourage everyone who comes along to make suggestions for charitable causes which can be either local or national. Since this time last year we have raised funds for the local branch of Mind (the mental health charity), Hail Weston Village Hall, The Motor Neurone Disease Association, Weston Garden Angels (gardening projects around the village), The Lewis Foundation (gift bags for cancer patients), Property Angels (helping victims of domestic violence), St John's Hospice Moggerhanger and Great Ormond Street Hospital. Also in November our regular bakers, who are predominantly women, decided to "down wooden spoons" and invite the gentlemen of Hail Weston to supply all the cakes for the café to raise funds for Prostate Cancer UK. A splendid XX men, including several 'non-bakers', rose magnificently to that challenge and there was something of a competitive feel to the afternoon. The popularity of this approach was reflected in takings of over £400 for the charity from cafe donations and sales of beautiful goods made by the Hail Weston Needle and Thread Group - so 'men only' month is very likely to be a repeat!

For the first quarter of 2024, the Cafe team decided to raise funds to provide a bench outside the front of St Nicholas' church where there is currently no seating. Thanks to the generosity of cafe supporters, we have now raised £500 which will be passed on to the PCC to choose a suitable type of bench. We hope this will bear a small plaque acknowledging our supporters.

Since its inception in 2016, the Cafe has raised just over £13K, including ~£2,200 from the past year alone. The Neighbourhood Café team are proud to be part of such a friendly, generous village.

Tim Price highlighted the East Park Solar Farm project and ways to stay informed as to form a view as the project progresses. He briefly outlined his personal view and opportunities for residents to form their own opinion (both supportive or non-supportive) He outlined opportunities to stay engaged as: -

[East Park Energy](#)

[Stop East Park Energy – Saying no to a 1,800 acre solar power plant](#)

Report from Hail Weston Wildlife and Gardening Group by Barbara Wallis

The group was formed in 2016 following a recommendation from the results of the first Community Plan. Our current membership has now reached 40 which we feel is a great achievement. We have monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of the month, with a speaker on wildlife or gardening topics. We also have an annual Garden Safari around selected gardens in the village, an annual plant sale, as well as outings in the summer to local places of interest. Annual membership is £7 with £1 per session and visitors are welcome £3 per session. Fees may differ for special events and are stated within the programme.

In about October 2022 we were asked by the Parish Council if we would tidy up the Garden of Rest as it was planned to hold a Remembrance Service there in November. So we found some volunteers and we dug up and replanted the area around the 2 statues in readiness for this Service.

After we had finished it was decided we could continue to look after the Garden of Rest and also some other areas in the village, so the "Garden Angels" was formed. We now have 15 members and we now also look after the 3 planted areas in the playing field, the willow tunnel and we have begun to tidy up the churchyard now that the renovations have been completed. In the Garden of Rest we recently planted 2 replacement and 3 new trees, which were purchased by the Parish Council.

Following the July Neighbourhood Café we were given the money donated that day and we used this to purchase daffodil bulbs which have been planted on the island in Orchard Close, along the grass verge by the telephone box and in front of the noticeboard. We also received a donation of daffodil bulbs from Notcutts Garden Centre in Brampton and these were planted in the Garden of Rest. Notcutts then gave us some more spring and allium bulbs so we planted some in the new cemetery and gave a lot away at our next meeting for members to take home.

Future plans for the Garden Angles are to make some planters to put by the High Street signs at both entrances to the village (if the Parish Council agree) and to continue the care and maintenance of various areas in the village.

New members to the Garden Group and/or the Garden Angels always welcome.

The Royal Oak by Tony Larkins Thank you for your continued support. We enjoyed a busy Mother's Day and with a huge amount of assistance from Gemma Bassett a great Burns Night. Alan left at the end of the year and Dawn is currently the Manager.

Hopefully you can have seen improvements and the village will continue to enjoy having a local pub. With so many pubs closing it is all about continued support.

Report from **St Nicolas Church Restoration Group by Anne-Marie Hamilton** Whilst there appears to be nothing happening on the restoration front at St Nicolas at present, in reality, a lot of work is quietly going on behind the scenes – none of it glamorous!

During Phase 2 of the Restoration, once the electrical connection to the new extension was installed, it became obvious that we needed to urgently re-wire the rest of the church as it is many years since this was last done. Unlike an ordinary home, you cannot just call in the electrician and get on with the job; plans need to be drawn up, permissions sought from various official bodies and finally, an application made to a court in London which represents the Diocese of Ely, for a Faculty (official permission) to carry out the work. It all takes time, and in the meantime, we are, once again, fund-raising frantically to complete the work quickly, in readiness for us to officially begin Phase 3 – Heating and Lighting.

The elderly fossil-fuel boiler at St Nicolas is obsolete, and it is impossible to get parts for it anymore. It has been nursed along by the PCC for several years – on each occasion with fingers crossed that it will get through another winter, but the time has finally come to say "Goodbye." (I think that the most generous of us would have to admit that the church is not very warm on a cold winter's day – even when the heating has been put on for several hours beforehand). As we want the church to be available for full community use as well as church services, it is imperative that we have a new system in place this year that is efficient, reliable, will provide almost instant heat, and does not use fossil fuel.

We have identified a lovely heating and lighting system which is especially designed for ancient churches and have seen it in operation in the church at Potton, where it was installed over 7 years ago. The PCC there is still delighted with it, and we feel that it will be perfect for St Nicolas, too.

We are organizing various fund-raising events over the next few months, and applying for numerous grants, in the hopes that by winter 2024, we will have the new system in place. We will keep you posted!

Report from Paul Baker I have now been supporting with all things concerning Hail Weston handyman activities for some 21 months and am pleased to say that my efforts have seen some results and thank you for the thanks and positive comments received.

Most important for the residents has been the resolution of drains that overflowed in periods of heavy rainfall, assisted by Tony Baker we tacked and identified areas of issue and with the eagle-eyed reporting on the appearance of the "gully sucker" by

residents were able to direct their efforts to the right place. We have one remaining gully to be cleared at the east end of the High Street and I am pursuing that one.

Elsewhere general repairs and maintenance of the Villages assets have included:

- Seat benches; repairs and repainting
- Fences, repairs and repainting
- Small play area: improvements to safety
- Clearing of vegetation and cutting back of trees
- Cleaning signs
- Clearing rubbish

I have also supported the Garden Angels in the preparing of areas for planting and moving plants.

Now we have recovered a bit of a backlog my thoughts turn to more routine matters which, some subject to Parish Council approval, are:

- Improvements to the ground around the slide in the park (agreed but to be progressed)
- Mapping the drainage (to which I have village support, and thank you)
- Updating and improving footpath signage around the village

If there is one disappointment that is the re-occurring issue of dogs fouling the path and grass areas, it is not as though the PC does not put out "poo bags" (and thanks to Karen McGlashan for now taking that over from Tony Baker, who we must thank for many years of diligence in that role). This is where we live, socialise and play!

As ever, any issue please let the Parish Clerk or I know and we will investigate and as appropriate and with approval (for me to do so) act.

Report from HDC Ward Cllr Stephen Cawley

Festival of Huntingdonshire: Collaboration with Town and Parish councils - 19th February

This week the Huntingdonshire Futures Team extended an invitation to Town & Parish Councils to join an online engagement session. This session has been scheduled to allow the Town and Parish Councils an opportunity to provide their thoughts and feedback on HDC's proposals for a Festival of Huntingdonshire.

For this engagement to be worthwhile; the Huntingdonshire Futures Team are understandably looking for a good turnout of representatives from Town and Parish Councils.

Monday, 1 April 2024 - Huntingdon DC 50th Anniversary

Thursday, 25 April 2024 - Huntingdonshire Day

Tuesday, 1 October 2024 - Huntingdonshire DC 40th Anniversary

Electric Vehicles and Charging Infrastructure

Working with Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, the Combined Authority wants local opinions to help plan for more electric vehicle (EV) charging points in the region to help meet demand. The Combined Authority wants to make sure they are planned for in the right way, informed by people's views.

The survey only takes five minutes and can be found here, along with further information: <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ev-charging/>.

People have until March 26, 2024.

CA Board Approves Mayor's Precept to Fund Bus Improvements

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board approved a Mayoral Precept of £36 a year for a Band D property. The annual sum, which equates to £3 per month per household, will be invested in improvements to dozens of bus routes

Garden Waste Subscription Service

Below is a list of the locations provisionally planned for the Saturday freighters Week

- Yaxley – Great Drove
- Stilton – High Street near golf Course
- Sawtry – Caresco
- One Leisure - Ramsey

Week 2

- Hill Rise Car Park St Ives
- One Leisure Outdoor Centre, St Ives
- Burgess Hall St Ives

Week 3

- Eastfield House
- One Leisure - Huntingdon
- Godmanchester Yard
- Riverside Car Park, Huntingdon

Week 4

- Catworth Layby
- Tilbrook Layby
- **Paxton Pits**
- **Riverside Car Park, St Neots**
- **One Leisure – St Neots**

Budget 2024/25

HDC's 2024/2025 budget was presented at a meeting of the Full Council on Wednesday, 21st February and approved for the forthcoming financial year.

The new financial plan sets out how the council will balance its budget and continue to protect vital frontline services despite decreasing government funding, along with rising costs and inflation.

The main headline is that HDC will have a balanced budget that does not spend reserves, but which does see an increase in Council Tax, the introduction of the Green Bin Tax and increases on many charges and fees.

HDC's element of the Council Tax will see Band D Council Tax go up by £5 a year from April 1 2024.

Free business support programme for Huntingdonshire businesses

A new business accelerator to support entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses has been launched by HDC via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

This funding has enabled a collaboration between HDC and Deyton Bell, who have been

commissioned to deliver a 12-month programme for new and existing businesses. The scheme is now open to entrepreneurs who have an idea to start a business and to those who have already started and are looking to develop and grow.

The programme offers free business support, helping people to develop their ideas, increase

business survivability, access experts and peer group support in addition to a range of workshops from understanding finances, operations to marketing skills and more.

<https://hba.deytonbell.com/>

Recent Presentations to Overview & Scrutiny

Flooding Management Update

https://mcusercontent.com/c12c267f6eb236cbf6c4c1a8a/files/9e8fa2e0-8327-afb4-5452-7d1fdb51c08/Flooding_Management_Update.pdf

Residents asked questions relating to signage on Ford Road and Bird Lane, Bird Lane footpath, Fly tipping increased on Ford Rd., bins, Solar Farm engagement, possibilities of Highways enhancements to Bird Lane & Green Lane.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm