

DEOPHAM & HACKFORD PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on Wednesday 6th December 2023, 7.30pm at Gralix Hall

Cllrs present:

Jacky Phoenix – Chair (JP), Chris Biggs (CB) – Vice Chair, Chris Coath (CC), Martin Skidmore (MS), Chris Chorley (CCh), Eliska Cheeseman (EC)

Absent:

Catherine Grand (CG), Cllr Josh Woolliscroft (JW), Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (MD),

Others present:

Jordana Wheeler (Clerk), Members of the public - 0.

1. To receive and accept apologies for absence
 - 1.1. Apologies were received and accepted from CG.
2. To receive any Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda and consider any requests for dispensation
 - 2.1. JP declared an interest in item 11.1. JP will not participate in the vote for 11.1.
3. To approve and sign the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 1st November 2023
 - 3.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2023 were received and read by Councillors prior to the meeting. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes.
4. To report on progress of matters arising from previous meetings
 - 4.1. The Clerk had nothing to report.
5. To receive an update on progress with the replacement play equipment and approve the purchase of new equipment
 - 5.1. The Clerk summarised the revised quotes and total costs of the play equipment selected for the next stage of installation. Three options were available based on funds available. Option one was under budget (3 pieces of equipment), option two over budget by approx. £250 (4 pieces of equipment) and option three was under budget (3 pieces of equipment plus picnic benches).
 - 5.2. JP noted that two further fundraising events were planned for early 2024 which could raise approx. £200-300. The Clerk noted that there is also another interest payment due which will contribute to funds available.
 - 5.3. JP felt it was better to install as much equipment as possible with the funds available (option two). Options were discussed for raising further funds for the remainder of the project. CB queried whether spending all the funds would prevent the Council from ap-

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plying for further grants which may require matched funding. The Clerk could not confirm either way without further research into grants but noted a number of other options for raising further funds. The Council **RESOLVED** to opt for option two (4 pieces of equipment) and order the maximum amount of play equipment with the funds available. This option includes fencing around the new equipment. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Clerk to make payment of up to a maximum of £5000 for the deposit for the play equipment (see item 7.2.3). The amount will be confirmed upon receipt of the official invoice and will be 20% of the final cost of the play equipment (including installation).

6. To consider and adopt an Internal Controls Policy

6.1. The Clerk explained the purpose of the policy to provide further details and guidance on how the Council's finances are managed. This policy will work alongside the Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and Risk Assessment. The policy also gives more details on how the Council will manage payments via online banking. The Council requested that; the policy clarifies that the Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer and a Councillor reviews the finances every 6 months. The Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the policy.

7. Finance

7.1. To note the updated NJC Payscales for 2023-24

7.1.1. The payscales for 2023-24 have been formally accepted by the Unions and are applicable from 1st April 2023. The backdated pay rise will be awarded in this month's pay.

7.2. To receive the bank reconciliation for November 2023 and to ratify or approve the following payments;

The Clerk noted there were payments to be made from both the HSBC current account and the new Unity Trust current account. Payments have been split as there are currently limited funds in the Unity Trust Account. The Clerk summarised the reason for, and process of transferring the remaining funds into the new Unity bank account, this is being done in stages. JP agreed to assist the Clerk, as a signatory, to process the transfer of funds. The Council considered the bank reconciliation, no queries were raised. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the payments.

	Payment Description – HSBC Current Account	Cheque Number	Amount
7.2.1	Noticeboard Company (UK) Ltd	100686	£924.53
7.2.2	Vortex Grounds Maintenance & Services Ltd	100687	£1104.00
7.2.3	Playquest Adventure Play Ltd – Deposit for new play equipment	100688	Up to £5000 (confirmed upon receipt of invoice)
7.2.4	Transfer from HSBC Deposit Account to Current Account	Letter to bank	£10,499.00
7.2.5	Deopham & Hackford Parish Council – Transfer from HSBC Current Account to Unity Trust Bank Current Account	100689	£8000.00
7.2.6	Deopham & Hackford Parish Council – Transfer of Deposit Account funds to Unity Trust Bank Deposit Account (to be paid once item 7.2.4 is complete)	100690	£10,499.00

	Payment Description – UNITY Trust Bank Current Account	Cheque Number	Amount
7.2.7	Gralix Hall – Hall Hire (June-Dec 2023)	Bank Transfer	£108.00
7.2.8	Jordana Wheeler – Salary & Expenses (Dec 2023)	Bank Transfer	£175.41

7.3. To consider and approve the final budget and precept for 2024-25

7.3.1. The Clerk summarised revisions to the budget to the following categories; Computer Purchase, Dog Bin Emptying, Hall Hire and Salary. Equipment purchase has also been increased by £200 to accommodate the purchase of a new dog bin. The overall total budget for precept purposes was £10,720.00. The tax base has reduced by 1 meaning the price for a band D property would increase by 43p per month (11% increase).

7.3.2. The Clerk presented a request from the Gralix Hall for a donation towards the purchase of a defibrillator. The Council considered various options for donating and the impact it may have on the budget. The Council **RESOLVED** to carry over the current budget for charity donations of £50 to 2024-25. This will be combined with the charity donation category for 2024-25 of £50 to make a donation of £100 towards the defibrillator. The Council requested confirmation that the defibrillator would be positioned on the outside of the Hall to ensure it was available to the public at all times.

7.3.3. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the budget for 2024-25.

The Council **RESOLVED** to set the precept for 2024-25 at £10,720.00

ACTION – Clerk to submit article to The Net to explain the precept for parishioners.

8. To agree to book the ‘Induction for new Councillors’ training course

8.1. The Clerk noted the training course was for EC and was within budget. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve booking the training.

9. To note discussions regarding improvements to the verges on Morley Road, Deopham

9.1. JP noted that the dangerous ‘S’ bend on Morley Road has recently been experiencing flooding during prolonged periods of rain and that some complaints had been received.

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The verges on this bend had been rebuilt with soil recently but are now being undercut again by vehicles driving on them. There is a ditch which runs perpendicular to the road which may potentially be blocked. It is believed that the ditch may then run under the road before heading towards Morley running next to the road. Norfolk County Council Highways have been out to investigate the ditch but have had trouble identifying the cause of the flooding. Councillors suggested that erosion of the verges may have caused the ditches to become blocked under the road.

ACTION – Clerk to report flooding problems to the Highways Engineer. Councillors will attempt to provide photo evidence of the flooding on the road next time it occurs.

10. To consider applying for a ‘Clean Up & Bloom’ grant

- 10.1. The Clerk shared details of the £300 grant and the suggestion from CG that it could be used to purchase some litter picking equipment alongside additional bulbs to be planted around the village. The Council **RESOLVED** to apply for the Clean Up & Bloom grant.

11. To consider a response to the following planning applications:

- 11.1. Application 2023/3256 – Demolition of existing rear extension and erection of two storey and single storey extension, Walnut Tree Farm, Stalland Lane, Deopham
The Council noted the proposed extension would not be visible from the road and was to replace a current extension which is leaking. The Council **RESOLVED** to support application 2023/3256 and to submit comments ensuring the application takes regard of the Council’s Planning Policy (including protection of dark skies).

12. Opportunity for public participation

- 12.1. JP noted some future fundraising events for the new play park
27th January 2024 – Bingo
17th February 2024 – Beetle Drive
- 12.2. It was noted that the road name signs at the junction of Morley Road/Attleborough Road/The Green have been replaced despite Norfolk County Council saying they did not need replacing.

13. To confirm the date of the next meeting

- 13.1. JP wished everyone a happy Christmas.
- 13.2. The next Council meeting will take place at Gralix Hall on Wednesday 7th February 2024, 7.30pm. The press and public are welcome to attend. Please note there is no meeting in January 2024.

The public meeting closed at 8.51pm.