
Upwell Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of Upwell Parish Council, Monday 11th September 2023, 7pm

Committee Members: Cllr Aston (Chair), Cllr Gooch, Cllr A Harrison, Cllr Shorting, Cllr K Harrison, Cllr Lester, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Carr, Cllr Judd, Cllr Turner.

Those Present: Cllr Aston, Cllr A Harrison, Cllr Lester, Cllr Shorting, Cllr K Harrison, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Carr, Cllr Judd, Cllr Gooch, Cllr Dawson, M Hilton Clerk.

Public: one

Apologies: Cllr Turner, BCllr Spikings, BCllr Rose.

MINUTES

- 1. Welcome and opening remarks:** the Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2. To consider and approve apologies for absence:** these were approved.
- 3. To declare any conflicts and pecuniary interests on any items on this month's agenda:** none declared
- 4. To approve the Minutes from the last meeting:** these were approved and signed by the Chair. The Extraordinary meeting minutes were signed by Cllr A. Harrison.
- 5. Public Forum (ten minutes only):** a member of the Village Hall Committee attended to ask questions of the Council about the recent redundancy of the Hall Manager. He believes there has been a breakdown in communication between the Committee and the Council. The questions were as follows:
 - Can the council explain the grounds on which the hall manager's role has been redundant? This is a basic principle of any redundancy process. That will also help answer the obvious question around the difference between a caretaker and a hall manager
 - Redundancy incurs cost. Is the council confident this has been a wise investment and how would it justify the decision regarding this expense if challenged by the volunteers helping to raise money for the hall or indeed Upwell taxpayers?
 - Is the council planning to implement tighter employment management processes going forward? Particularly if that has played any part in the situation we are in today.
 - Given that I understand concerns were raised about hall matters, can the council confirm that a process to review those concerns was started and what was the outcome of any process?
 - Is the council able to explain why decisions on running the hall were taken - and appear to be still taken - without any attempt to discuss them with the wider committee first? Nothing can be more central to this than how the hall is managed day to day.
 - Does the council recognise that committee members may feel exposed by decisions taken on their behalf, given they have been tasked with designated responsibility for some of these matters to date?
 - Does the council agree a full review of how the hall is managed is now required and implemented once agreed?
 - Does the council intend to reconstitute the role of the committee in light of all of the above?
 - Finally, given the complexity of the hall management structure as it is currently defined, does the council agree that only a councillor can likely lead any newly reconstituted committee?

He also asked if a lead Councillor would attend the Committee meeting on Tuesday 12th September. The Council did not respond to the questions posed.

Clerk to the Council; Melanie Hilton (CiLCA Qualified). Mobile; 07368 420237 Email; upwellpc@gmail.com

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6. To discuss and consider the Action Log from previous meetings:

- The village feature: the Council are waiting for another quote. Cllr Dawson has been speaking with Highways regarding if another dropped kerb is really required. There are two other options available, extend the path or go behind the barrier, both would reduce the cost of the project. Highways are speaking with Richard Smith regarding this.
- Takeover of the cemetery from the Borough Council: Cllr Aston has spoken with Tracy Brooker; the question was posed: Do the Council take over the maintenance of the allotments now or wait until the land is required by the cemetery? Cllr A. Harrison said the Council already maintained the allotment land with the help of the tenants and Community Services. It was agreed to take over the commitment of the allotment land now, instead of at a later date.
- Trod between Lakes End village hall and bus stop: no update on when this will start.
- AD Hurst Sign: this should be installed any day.
- War Memorial wall: a quote of £1440 was agreed by the Council to repair the wall.

Cllr Dawson informed the Council he is holding a meeting at Marshland St James with Highways to which Councillors or the Clerk may attend.

He told the Council he has a small pot of money (around £80) which can be used for small amounts of verge cutting, such visibility splays, next year. Regarding the riverbank slippage, there should be another meeting between highways and Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) in the Autumn. He suggested that Upwell, Outwell and Nordelph work together on the river barriers either getting them repaired or replaced. Cllr Gooch said that as there had not been many cuts of the riversides this year, it had meant there were more rats around. Cllr A. Harrison said that there will be another meeting early next year with MLC, Welle Creek Trust, highways and Upwell Parish Council to discuss a plan for 2024.

- Old mowers and strimmer: the hedge trimmer works, the strimmer needs some repairs, the two lawnmowers are both going to be scrapped. The brick building these were kept in is very damp so Cllr K. Harrison will keep the equipment at his farm.
- Dodds Style: no update.
- Pole stay Baptist Road: this belongs to BT the Clerk will try and contact them
- The new mapboard showing the Public Rights of Way has been fitted opposite the Five Bells.
- It was agreed to sell the SAM2 camera to Tilney St Lawrence for £1000.

7. Reports from individual Councillors, Council Groups and Clerk

i. To approve Planning applications decisions: *Cllr Harrison*

- Planning Application Consultation 23/01015/F. Change of use of land to paddock and erection of fencing and stables/store at The Cottage Stonehouse Road Upwell Wisbech Norfolk. *Upwell Planning Group supports this application.*
- Planning Application Consultation 23/01384/CU. Retrospective Change of use from agricultural land to maintained lawn at Finesse Motorsport Ltd, The Common Upwell Norfolk PE14 9AW. *The Planning Group support this application as there are no Material Grounds for objection.*

The Council approved the decisions made.

ii. To discuss garden allotment rent increase: *Cllr A Harrison*. After a discussion it was agreed to increase the allotment rent to £21 per annum starting in October 2024.

iii. To discuss quote for cutting the overgrown trees at Low Side land: *Cllr A Harrison*. One quote has been received so far; another one is on its way. Whichever is the cheapest quote the Council approved this work to be carried out.

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- iv. To discuss PRow's: Cllr Lester.** Currently, Norfolk County Council (NCC) efforts are patchy, cutting the PRow. They have offered to allocate to the Parish Council their budget £222 per annum to cut these. Cllr Judd and Graham Butler have been asked to quote for cutting these. This item to be carried onto the October meeting.
- v. To discuss copy date and content of the next Parish Magazine: Cllr Lester.** The copy date is the 22nd September, any ideas, please get them sent to Cllr Lester or Cllr Aston. Cllr Lester will write an article regarding the new mapboard and the PRow. Cllr A. Harrison has asked MLC to write an article on the riverbank cutting.
- vi. To discuss war memorial hedge: Cllr Shorting.** There are holes in the current hedge and to stop horses at horse shows going through, herring fencing has been erected. It was agreed for Cllr A. Harrison to get a quote for concrete posts and heavy-duty chain-link fencing. He will also get a quote from Tim Dewdney.
- vii. Update from Cemetery working group: Cllr Shorting.** A branch has been blown off in the high wind, Cllr Judd has removed this. Cllr Shorting will call CGM and ask why the grass was only cut once in August and they have not yet cut in September.
- viii. Update from Communications working group: Cllr Turner.** Nothing reported
- ix. Update from Allotments: Cllr A. Harrison.** Nothing reported.
- x. Update from Village Hall Committee.** Nothing reported as there is a meeting is tomorrow night.
- xi. Update from Low Side Land working group: Cllr Aston.** The report was as follows:
As previously advised, Charlie de Bono of LIVEDIN made a site visit accompanied by Cllrs. Aston and A. Harrison and Parish Clerk Melanie Hilton.
Charlie had already researched the area and site. He was most interested to include a walkway that would incorporate the old Tramway route as far as possible as well as other features that we had previously hoped/asked for.
CCP have been asked to supply copies of the searches and studies already undertaken to him. We are also trying to ascertain from Anglian Water the margin distance required along the left side nearest to existing housing on Scholars Way.
Once all the above information has been provided, Charlie will produce a plan of suitable properties for the site, mainly two and three bed homes, with a cost and profit analysis.
- Cllr Gooch was not happy that other Councillors had not been asked to attend the meeting. Cllr Aston assured her it was just for Charlie de Bono to visit the site.
There was a discussion about whether just selling four plots off at the front would be feasible. No other meeting with LIVEDIN has been arranged.
- xii. To discuss riverbank cutting for 2024/25 and the barrier issues: Cllr A. Harrison.** Cllrs K. and A. Harrison and Tim Dewdney have cut around the barriers on the riverside and Tim collected all the rubbish. As the budget will soon be set for 2024/25 it should include the cost of at least two verge cuts per annum are included. The Clerk was asked to contact Highways regarding getting three-way temporary traffic lights positioned at the top of Pius Drove so the verges could be safely cut there and the barriers repaired. The Clerk will also ask if the square checkerboard sign could be replaced with two horizontal ones.
Cllr Gooch said that the overgrown verges along the riverbank had encouraged more rats this year. Could money also be put in the budget so the riverbanks can be flailed.
- 8. To note any Health and Safety issues:** three joints on the rails opposite the church in the layby have come apart. Cllrs A. and K. Harrison will deal with this. It was also agreed for the village sign to be refurbished by Cllrs A. Harrison and Lester.

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9. Finance

i. To note payments made since last meeting: these were noted.

Payments for September 2023 Authorisation					
Payee	Goods/Services	VAT	TOTAL	DD/EP <small>electronic payment / direct debit</small>	Supplier/Service
Melanie Hilton expenses	31.13	0.00	31.13	EP	HMRC allowance for home working, mileage to Lakes End meeting
Salaries	3930.61	0.00	3930.61		
Melanie Hilton		0.00	0.00	EP	109 Hours Clerk 20 hours village hall
Charlotte Hilton		0.00	0.00	EP	Village Hall cleaner 26 hours plus holiday pay
David Aston		0.00	0.00	EP	Hall Managers fee plus 2.75 cleaning hours and 6.25 bar hours
HMRC	784.23	0.00	784.23	EP	Month 5
Nest Pension Scheme	126.60	0.00	126.60	DD	Clerks pension
Tim Dewdney		0.00	0.00	EP	44 Groundsman Hours
Tim Dewdney		0.00	0.00	EP	Strim Town St riverbank
Kelvin Judd		0.00	0.00	EP	20 hours garden cemetery plus spray
Andrew Harrison	9.99	2.00	11.99	EP	First Aid Kit for gardeners purchased from Screwfix
Andrew Harrison	5.97	1.19	7.16	EP	new allotment tap
Upwell village Hall	44.00	0.00	44.00	EP	Committee room hire 10th and 26 July
CGM	542.88	108.58	651.46	EP	Cemetery grass cutting 19/7 and 3/7
ASB	30.00	0.00	30.00	EP	Window Cleaning Bus stops
WAVE	5.90	0.00	5.90	DD	Water for Cemetery
Veolia	147.74	29.55	177.29	DD	Waste disposal
SWALEC	1170.43	61.60	1232.03	DD	Street Light Energy
Westcotec	61.25	12.25	73.50	DD	Street light maintenance fee
TOTAL	6,890.73	215.17	7,105.90		

- ii. To note income and expenditure balances reconciled from the previous month: these were noted.
 iii. To note income and expenditure balances reconciled for the Village Hall account: these were noted.

10. To review the staffing issues at the Village Hall: a discussion took place regarding whether the Village Hall Committee or the Parish Council should set the salary for the new position. It was agreed the Parish Council would, as they are the employer. It was agreed the new Caretaker position at the Village Hall would be paid £11 per hour. The advert can go out as soon as possible. Cllrs Robinson and A. Harrison will look at the draft job description and make amendments to fit the role.

11. To propose any items for the next agenda: please advise the Clerk at least a week before the next meeting date.

To note the date of the next parish council meeting – To note the date of the next Full Council meeting – 9th October 2023 at 7pm at Three Holes Village Hall

12. Close: the meeting closed at 21.10pm

Signed by the Chair Date