

# Hessett Parish Council

---

## MINUTES

of the meeting electronically via Zoom on

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Poulter (Chair), Graham Bauly, Simon Elsworth, Katie Mitcham, Andrew Pearson and Debbie Willis.

**In attendance:** Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council), County & District Councillor Otton (part).

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, especially Cllr Mitcham for whom this was her first meeting as a councillor, and thanked everyone for co-operating with the electronic meeting format.

### **38. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Stuart Turvill

### **39. Declarations of Interest**

- a. There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests declared.
- b. There were no Other Disclosable Interests declared.

### **40. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were agreed to be a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them as such.

### **41. County & District Councillor Report**

County and District Cllr Penny Otton had submitted a written report and this was received.

In relation to the flooding problems on Hubbards Lane, Cllr Otton reported that, amongst other actions, jetting of the culvert was due to have been done. As this had not yet happened she would chase this up.

### **42. Public Forum**

A member of the public expressed disappointment that the possibility of converting part of the Heath into woodland was not on the agenda. The Clerk responded that, as reported in previous minutes, the Council had decided that residents should be consulted about the matter and that in order to maximise the response that this should take place once Covid related restrictions were lifted. This would probably be towards the end of May.

It was also noted that there are pluvial water flows coming north from Felsham which would be likely to be exacerbating the flooding at Hubbards Lane and that these flows could be as a result of the ditches having been cleared.

### **43. Clerk's Report & Administrative Business**

- a. **Decisions under Delegated Authority** - There were no decisions to report.

- b. **General Report** - The Clerk reported that:

- ◆ The informal tree survey had been scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> February but had had to be postponed due to snow. This will now take place on 28<sup>th</sup> March;
- ◆ Steve Griffiths has agreed to undertake work for the Council and will start with the fencing to the Play Area in April;
- ◆ A resident with a property backing on to the Heath had asked for confirmation as to ownership of a tree which is overhanging their garden and the studio in their neighbour's garden. This will be checked during the tree survey;

- ◆ The Council agreed to contribute to the installation/ maintenance of Wi-Fi in the village hall and the Village Hall Committee has asked for this to be quantified. It was resolved to offer £300 for year one, to support installation costs, and to confirm willingness to make a reasonable contribution to running costs thereafter;
- ◆ The temporary law permitting councils to meet electronically expires after the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and this is before the first possible date on which public meetings will be allowed - and before individuals who are in the strictest shielding category have been advised to resume normal activities. This means that there would be a period in which neither electronic nor physical meetings would lawful and in which some members may be unable to participate. The Government has been lobbied to extend the temporary provision but is resisting doing this at present, although this may change. This may have an impact on meeting dates in May;
- ◆ The deadline for opting in to free school transport is the 31<sup>st</sup> May - all users of school transport have to re-register each year.
- ◆ Drainage works in Hubbards Lane would be covered in item 44d below.

#### **44. Planning & Environment**

##### **a. New Planning Application Consultations**

**DC/21/01416:** *Plot 2, Land South of Hubbards Lane, Hessett.* Erection of one dwelling with detached cart lodge.

It was noted that there is already permission extant for a house on this site but that this proposal rotates the building slightly and moves it very slightly east. In addition, the area immediately by the previously proposed house set aside for the cart lodge in the existing plan has been incorporated into the newly proposed house as accommodation. The cart lodge itself has been re-located to a completely separate part of the site, to the east.

It was also noted that the footprint of the proposed house is significantly larger than the previous plan - by more than just the subsumed footprint of the cart lodge. The proposed house itself would be 42.7m<sup>2</sup> greater (25.8%) and the total foot print (including the cart lodge) would be almost 46% greater.

In discussion it was agreed that the reorientation of the house could represent an improvement on the previous plan because the rotation of the house opens up better views to the south between the house (including views of the listed building beyond the development site) and the change of axis means that the uniform line of the two approved houses would be broken up. This would result in a less monolithic impression and be more in keeping with the way in which much housing in the village is higgledy-piggledy rather than grid like.

However, great concern was expressed about the significant increase in the size of both the house (+26% footprint) and cart lodge (+8% footprint). These increases were felt to be unacceptable, especially given that the original proposal for three houses on this site was objected to by this council, and refused by the planning authority, for reasons that included over-development of the site.

Furthermore, it was agreed that the proposed placement of the cart lodge away from the house and immediately by the lane would add to an urbanising effect on a currently sparsely developed enclave of the village. There were also concerns that the area proposed for the cart lodge is very boggy and therefore potentially unsuitable for any development, and that there did not appear to adequate provision for turning but that any such provision would necessarily be on very boggy ground.

It was noted that drainage remains a serious problem on the immediately adjacent part of Hubbards Lane and that any increase in built footprint in the area leads to a reduction in the amount of open land available to absorb rainfall. Although work is being undertaken to rectify the additional flooding caused by the first phase of development at this site, the long-term flooding problems are likely to be exacerbated by such a decrease.

In the light of the discussion the council resolved to **object** to the proposals for the above reasons.

**b. Updates on Planning Applications Considered Previously**

- i **DC/21/00473 - 1 Shrubbery Close, Hesett:** The application, which had been supported by the Council, had been approved.
- c. **Five Bells** - Nothing to report.
- d. **Drainage at Hubbards Lane** - The County's pluvial flooding team has been very slow to deal with this serious, ongoing problem and does seem to have grasped the complexity of the situation sufficiently. Among other things, they have failed to understand (despite photographs and information provided by both the council and residents) that the development on the southern side of Hubbards Lane has had a significant impact on the situation and that problems also pre-existed. For example, the County Council's Flood and Water Manager has stated that a ditch has been formed from the corner of Hubbards Lane and the Green which should improve the situation as there was previously only a shallow channel. In fact it was the removal of a ditch in exactly this location and the resulting flooding that initiated further contact in September 2020. Other matters, such as the blocking of the under-road culvert during construction works, have added to the problem over time and the culvert is due for jetting (see item 41, above). C Cllr Otton will escalate matters and the Clerk will follow up.

**45. Purchase of a Vehicle Activated Sign for Speeding**

The Clerk reported that a VAS would cost £2,625 and a further £350 for the data recording module if that were felt desirable; both prices nett of VAT. It was agreed to review this at the next meeting and in the meantime to find out more about, and register for, the new roving VAS scheme being introduced by the County Council.

**46. Grass Cutting Contract**

The current contractor had submitted a quotation and this was discussed. In the context of the significantly higher quotations received from other contractors last year and the efficiency, high quality and helpfulness of the current contractor, M&TJ, it was resolved to continue with them for the 2021 season.

**47. RPA Payments and the Future**

This discussion was prompted by the abolition of the current payments, being phased out by 2024, the lack of clarity about ELMs (the successor scheme) and the low hay yield from the Heath, which has led to Mr Mike Phillips to give notice of his intention to withdraw the land from his RPA claim after this year.

Given the imponderables and the fact that a consultation with residents on the future shape of the Heath (in relation to potential woodland and/or orchard planting schemes) will be undertaken soon, it was resolved to take no action at present but to discuss the matter at a future meeting, once further information is available.

**48. Finance**

- a. The schedule of receipts and payments was received and approved by Council.

**49. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas**

- ◆ Cllr Bauly recalled the fact that new residents used to have a welcome booklet delivered to them when they moved in but that the replacement of the booklet with the information on the website meant that new residents received no official welcome.

It was agreed that a welcoming letter, which also pointed to information on the web site, would be produced and circulated to councillors so that they could print it off and deliver it to any new residents.

- ◆ Cllr Elsworth reported that there had been a considerable amount of littering from passing cars at the southern end of the village. He will do a litter pick when time permits. It was noted that the County Council has reported a significant increase in this problem across the County since the first lockdown and it was felt that it could be worthwhile to organise a Community Litter Pick, post Covid restrictions. This will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

**The meeting closed at 8.58pm.**

Signed as a true record by authority of the Council

Chair

Date