

# Hessett Parish Council

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## MINUTES

of the meeting held at Hessett & Beyton Village Hall, Hessett on

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

Social distancing and other Covid-19 mitigation measures were in place.

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Poulter (Chair), Katie Mitcham and Debbie Willis.

**In attendance:** Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council),  
County Councillor Otton (part) and 4 members of the public.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for co-operating with Covid-19 protection measures.

### 43. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Turvill and the Council resolved to approve the reason. The Council also resolved to wish Cllr Turvill a speedy recovery

### 44. Declarations of Interest

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

### 45. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were agreed to be a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them as such.

### 46. County & District Councillor Report

County and District Cllr Penny Otton had submitted a written report and this was received. C Cllr Otton highlighted the Plant a Tree for Life Scheme and that the bus services had been cut in Beyton and that this was proving problematic for school pupils and that further Covid protective measures had been introduced that day. C Cllr Otton also reported that she had repeatedly chased matters up with regard to the ongoing flooding measures, as yet without success, however, a new pot of money relating to flooding for specific localities had included Hessett - it was not yet known exactly how much money will be allocated.

### 47. Public Forum

The Chair opened the public forum. One resident wished to speak, in support of the planning items to be discussed under items 49.a.ii and 49.a.iii. The Chair indicated that he would allow a contribution during the discussion of the items themselves.

There was no other business under this item.

### 48. Clerk's Report & Administrative Business

- a. **Decisions under Delegated Authority** - None to report.
- b. **Correspondence from:**
  - i. **New Hospital Consultation** - Highlighting consultation dates.
  - ii. **Mid Suffolk District Council - Announcing arrangements for refuse collection over the Christmas and New Year periods.** This information will be posted to the website and noticeboard nearer Christmas.
  - iii. **Woolpit Short Mat Bowls Club** - Asking that a notice publicising their club be posted on the notice board - it was agreed that this would be permitted.
  - iv. **Citizens Advice Bureau, Stowmarket** - Asking for a grant. The Council discussed whether

to place consideration of a grant on a future agenda but as most residents who use the CAB do so in Bury St Edmunds, it was agreed that this would not be considered.

- v. **From Suffolk County Highways department** - An HGV Routes Consultation is being undertaken by them. This is not an issue that affects the village much but details can be found on the SCC website.

Other items of correspondence would be raised under specific items later in the agenda.

### c. **Other Matters and Action on Ongoing Business**

The Clerk noted that the much shorter than normal gap between meetings, coupled with holidays, meant that there was not a great deal to report. He reported the following:

**Planning Enforcement at Bridges** - The Clerk reported that, following previous discussion, the works were still not proceeding in line with the planning permission and that in particular the appearance of the house will not be as per the drawings and that a window that should have been installed as opaque and fixed (i.e. not capable of being opened) had been installed in a slightly higher position and could be opened. The Clerk had followed this up and awaited a response - the Council agreed that it is important to follow up on matters of planning enforcement.

**Defibrillator** - After several delays, this had finally been installed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October.

**Bench & Picnic Table** - These are scheduled for delivery in the last week of January.

**Telephone kiosk plans** - The Clerk had assisted Cllr Willis sort out the responses from those who expressed willingness to help with the telephone kiosk renovation or ongoing maintenance and she will be sending out a leaflet to all those people (39 in total) shortly, with potential dates for a meeting on site.

**Play area fencing** - A quotation for the work – for similar fencing to the existing with the posts set in concrete - had been received for considerably lower than other recent quotes and was closer to the figure that had been allocated originally. The Council resolved to obtain one further quotation and make a decision at the next meeting.

**NextDoor Website** - Members of the public have complained about the fact that anything that questions the comments made by the administrator or the accuracy of his reports in relation to the parish council seem to get removed very quickly.

The Clerk reported that he had asked to be added to this group, verbally and in writing, in order to be able to provide information and especially to correct any inaccuracies. The administrator, who is now known to be Mr Marcus Sanders, asked the Clerk why he wanted to be added and the Clerk has explained the reasons but has so far been refused admission. In brief discussion it was felt that the most likely explanation for this was that it must suit the administrator's purposes to not have someone in the group who is able to provide responses to any inaccurate information that is posted.

It seems that some residents have become aware of the problem of false and misleading information as there have apparently been social media postings that seek to set the record straight and also to support both the Council and Councillors and thank them for their work.

**Vexatious and repetitive correspondence** - The vexatious and repetitive correspondence from one resident, addressed to both the chair and the Clerk, has continued. The correspondent does not seem capable or willing to understand clear information that is provided in responses or in the Council's general communications. An example of this was that s/he had recently reported on social media that the Council was incompetent because it had published conflicting dates for its next meeting when, in fact, the Council had advertised two completely different meetings (this meeting of the Council and the public meeting relating to the potential Village Association). The Clerk and Chair have largely adopted the tactic of not responding to patently false statements or anything that simply repeats the many previous inaccurate statements and questions that have already been answered. Nonetheless it was reported that the continual hostility and antagonism causes great stress as well as absorbing a

disproportionately vast amount of time

The Chair has now blocked the person from his personal email inbox, as he does not use his email address for public correspondence which should, in any case, be sent to the Proper Officer.

In discussion it was made clear that correspondence for the Council should be sent to the Clerk and that correspondence for individual councillors should be sent either to the Council's address for passing on or directed to the contact details for that councillor as provided on the notice board and website.

**Bank mandate** - The Bank is being slow to send out a correctly revised mandate (which is now originated by the Bank, ready printed for signature, rather than being completed by the customer).

The Council received the report.

## 49. Planning & Environment

### a. New Planning Application Consultations

i. **DC/21/04402 - 7 Lime Tree Close, Hessett:** *Erection of two storey side and first floor rear extensions (following demolition of existing side ground floor store/hall and rear sun room) and erection of a cart lodge. Revised Cart Lodge and siting*

This application had been discussed at the last meeting of the Council but revised proposals had been received. The Council had no objections to the proposal in its revised form.

ii. **DC/21/05522 and DC/21/05523 - Wilwyn, The Street, Hessett; Planning and Listed Building Consent:** *Erection of rear extension and re-roofing (following demolition of conservatory and chimney); Erection of replacement front porch extension and formation of parking space and metal railings.*

This house is semi-detached with the house that is dealt with under the next item, and is in common ownership. Councillors noted that the drive way to the south of the property was too narrow to accommodate the proposed larger porch because neighbours' access via the shared drive would be impeded. However, at the invitation of the Chair, the applicant explained that on the original drawings the size and position of the porch had been inadvertently expanded onto the shared drive but that this had been corrected in a revised submission.

The surfacing of the drive was discussed because permeability in this area, where flooding is a regular occurrence, was felt to be important. However, underneath the superficial layer of the current drive there is solid concrete and so the proposed block paving would represent an improvement. On the basis of the revision to the porch, it was resolved offer no objection.

iii **DC/21/05524 and DC/21/05525 - Alwyd, The Street, Hessett; Planning and Listed Building Consent:** *Construction of new porch, replacement of windows and enlargement of door, installation of railings around front garden (following demolition of existing porch).*

It was noted that the proposal is for substantial changes which in many circumstances would constitute an excessive amount of damage to a Grade II listed building. However, this cottage has been very much changed and altered over the centuries and much of the work is to relatively recent additions or adaptations, including the windows.

In discussion it was felt that there were no significant conservation issues and that the proposals represented an improvement. The Council therefore resolved to support application.

**Item 49.a.iv - DC/21/05717 - 3 Heath Close, Hessett:** *Erection of part single, part two storey rear extension (following demolition of conservatory).*

It was noted that the property is a mid C20 semi-detached house set in a cul-de-sac of similar houses and that although the proposal is significant in size, at ground floor level part

of the extension would replace an existing structure. A neighbour had objected on the basis of scale and potential impact to their property.

In discussion it was pointed out that although this extension was not very different in scale from most of the others in Heath Close it was of a different type of design which took the roofline higher. Councillors considered the question of sunlight and referred to the site location plan which showed that direct sunlight would still be available to neighbours for most of the day.

On balance it was felt that the extension was acceptable and that the Council resolved that it would not object.

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

There were no updates.

#### **50. Five Bells Inn**

The owners had made application for the discharge of conditions. Although, technically, the new house should not have been occupied until the discharge of conditions relating to the listed building works had been approved it was felt that, as long as the conditions were now approved, there was no action necessary.

#### **51. Formation of an Independent Village Association**

The Clerk reported that 29 people had attended the public meeting and that, despite one or two attempts to hijack the agenda, it had been a very positive atmosphere. There was clear interest in developing the idea of voluntary Village Association that would arrange events in the village and co-ordinate voluntary work to support the life of the village. The meeting mandated a working group of seven people (including councillors Willis and Turvill and the Clerk) to develop a draft constitution for consideration at a further Village meeting early in the new year. The date for the working group to meet had been held up by one member not responding to requests for availability but the Clerk said that he would fix a date shortly regardless.

#### **52. Queens Platinum Jubilee/ Big Picnic**

Cllr Mitcham reported that the working group had had an initial meeting and that further discussion would continue.

#### **53. Finance**

##### **a. Financial Statements**

The Council reviewed the bank reconciliation and summary accounts to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and noted the current financial position.

In discussion it was explained that the size of the current reserve had been boosted by two years of lower spending during Covid, the receipt of grants to cover items that would otherwise have been paid for from current funds and the receipt of CIL funds (money for the development of infrastructure arising from growing population). The aim should be to reduce the reserve to about £11,000, being one year's running costs, so although several significant amounts had been earmarked for future projects (and so the reserves will reduce over the coming months) there will still be funds available for further projects.

Responding to a question, the Clerk explained that the income from recycling would be much reduced due to the previous contractor to the District Council having withdrawn because collections had become uneconomic. A revised scheme had been introduced but at a much lower financial return.

The Council resolved to receive and accept the financial statements.

##### **b. 2022/23 Budget**

The Clerk explained that the figures presented were intended only as a stimulus for thought, prior to the main discussion. The figures provided a baseline using the projected outcome for the current year (with any one-offs stripped out) together with a general 3% uplift for inflation proofing. He encouraged Councillors to consider any spending initiatives, the degree of

inflation-proofing advisable and so forth, with a view to bringing forward a complete budget for approval in January. Councillors were asked to submit any ideas by the 6<sup>th</sup> December so that appropriate budget models could be prepared ahead of the next meeting. The Clerk also drew attention to the inclusion of costs for employing a Parish Warden had been included for 1.5 hours per week. This would be someone to keep an eye on the state of the village, identify any problems that need attention and undertake minor works such as the cleaning of signs. The Council agreed that this was a good idea and should be carried forward into the next version of the budget.

It was also proposed that the Chair undertake a review of the pay and hours of the Clerk as it was felt that these may have fallen behind the needs of the village and that the work load should be examined. It was noted that, before the appointment of the current Clerk, 12 hours had been employed whereas the current Clerk was employed for 8 hours. This will be carried forward as a separate item for the next agenda.

It was felt that Insurance costs may rise above the rate of inflation and that this should be provided for in the budget.

A suggestion was made for reviewing the general approach to the maintenance of the Heath, for example encouraging wildlife and other uses, alongside the planting of trees, and that therefore some money should be allocated towards this in the budget.

If Councillors have any further proposals they will let the Clerk know by 6<sup>th</sup> December so that they can be considered within the proposals that will be discussed in January.

### **c. Receipts and Payments**

The Council received the schedule of receipts and payments and resolved to approve the payments. The Council further resolved to authorise the signature of the cheques by the Chair and Andrew Pearson.

### **54. Email List of Residents**

After brief discussion, it was resolved that the Council would develop an emailing list to assist with the dissemination of news and information about the Council's work and as a way of soliciting residents' views. The importance of observing correct Data Protection measures was noted. The Clerk will investigate the possibility of an appropriate landing page on the website, to facilitate sign-up and acceptance of the uses to which the email addresses would be put, and he will report back to the next meeting.

### **55. Suggestion Box**

At the last meeting the idea of installing a suggestion box had been raised. It was agreed that this could be a helpful way of providing residents, especially those who do not use the internet, with a way of contributing ideas. It was resolved to include a suggestion box in the renovation of the phone box and Cllr Willis will address this.

### **56. Signs**

Ownership of the signs was not clear but the Clerk felt that, although the gate-like signs do not appear on the asset register, they were probably the property of the Parish Council. The budget should include a sum for their maintenance and/ or replacement and this would be added to the budget proposal.

### **57. Repair of Football Nets/ Posts**

It was resolved that up to £350 would be allocated to the maintenance of the nets and the rubbing-down/ painting of the posts.

### **58. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas**

The following points of information were reported:

- ◆ Cllr Willis reported that the Village Hall Committee had had its AGM. The committee had agreed further improvements to the hall including a new door, as the integral lock had failed and that an asbestos report would be prepared. Hire charges would also be increased a little and CPR training will be offered to residents. Cllr Willis also reported that the idea of

dedicatory plaque had been rejected, because it was felt that it would be invidious to name a small number of people when so many people have contributed. Cllr Mitcham suggested that the committee could consider creating a History of the Village Hall and Cllr Willis will raise this at the Committee's next meeting.

- ◆ Cllr Poulter reported that the Hessett Charities is getting in touch with the Charity Commission to update the membership records. The Charities are keen to get some new trustees and revivify the charity.

**The meeting closed at 9.27pm.**

Signed as a true record by authority of the Council

Chair

Date