



HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Helmdon Parish Council held in the Helmdon Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon on **Wednesday 7th May 2025 at 7:30 pm.**

Present: Cllrs Harris, Hart, Moody (Chair), Plunkett, Shepherd, and Marchant.

Members of the public: 6 members of the public present, Unitary Cllr Eastwood.

- 367. Election of Chair** – It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Hart as the Chairman. Cllr Hart completed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Cllrs expressed their thanks to Cllr Moody for his 4 years of excellent chairmanship.
- 368. Election of Vice Chair** – It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Moody as the vice-chairman.
- 369. Confirmation of receipt of completed Declarations of Acceptance of Office for all councillors** – Confirmed.
- 370. To receive and approve apologies for absence** – None.
- 371. To fill vacancies by co-option** – It was **RESOLVED** to co-opt Jo Fitzroy-Ezzy, Lindsey Sharman, and Jennie Smith. The co-opted councillors will be asked to complete their Declarations of Acceptance of Office before the next meeting.
- 372. Declarations of Interest** – Cllr Hart declared an interest in item 390 and Cllr Moody declared an interest in the payment to NCALC under item 389c so they will leave the meeting when the relevant items are discussed.

It was agreed to move the open forum to this stage of the meeting.

Cllr Eastwood left the meeting at 8:01pm.

- 373. To confirm the council's eligibility to exercise the General Power of Competence (GPC)** – It was confirmed that 2/3 of the councillors were elected (unopposed) and the council has a CiLCA qualified clerk. Therefore, the council is eligible to exercise the GPC until the next election.
- 374. To confirm members for the following committees:**
- a. Finance** – Cllr Moody, Cllr Marchant, Cllr Hart. The fourth vacancy will be filled at the next meeting when the new councillors are in attendance. **Clerk to put on next agenda.**
 - b. Planning** – Cllr Marchant, Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Harris, Cllr Shepherd. The fifth vacancy will be filled at the next meeting when the new councillors are in attendance. **Clerk to put on next agenda.**

1 member of the public left the meeting at 8:08pm

- c. HR** – Cllr Hart, Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Moody.
- 375. To Review the Terms of Reference for the following committees:**
- a. Finance** – It was **RESOLVED** to re-adopt with no changes.
 - b. Planning** – It was **RESOLVED** to re-adopt with no changes noting that further review may be necessary if the Biodiversity Policy is adopted under item 379a.
 - c. HR** – It was **RESOLVED** to re-adopt with no changes.
- 376. To confirm parish representatives:**

- a. **Internal Controls Councillor** – Cllr Moody.
- b. **Parish Paths Warden** – Cllr Shepherd.
- c. **Parish Highways Representative** – Cllr Moody.
- d. **Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator** – Cllr Moody
- e. **Police Liaison Representative** – Cllr Marchant.
- f. **Health & Safety Officer** – Cllr Marchant.
- g. **Tree Warden** – Mikey Birchall.
- h. **Flag Master and Deputy Flag Master** – Geoff Bridger, John Coatsworth.
- i. **Webmaster** – Richard Farquharson, Cllr Plunkett.
- j. **Recycling Warden** – Billie Minshall.
- k. **Speed Indicator Device Officer** – Andrew Smith.
- l. **Defibrillator Officer** – Sophie Harwood.
- m. **HS2 Liaison Officer** – Cllr Marchant.
- n. **Allotment Working Group** – Cllr Moody, Cllr Shepherd, 1 vacancy remaining.
- o. **Parish Plan Working Group** – Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Moody, Cllr Shepherd, 1 vacancy remaining.
- p. **Any other representatives that may be considered necessary**
 - School liaison** – Vacancy to be filled at next meeting.
 - Flooding Wardens** – Chris Thorpe, Richard Farquharson.
 - Blackpits Monitoring Group Representative** – Cllr Marchant.
 - Station Road Working Group** – Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Shepherd, Cllr Marchant, Peter Coy, Jennie Smith.
 - WNC Parish Conference attendees** – Cllr Hart, Cllr Shepherd.
 - Local Plan Part 2 zoom** – Cllr Plunkett, Cllr Shepherd.
 - Good Food West Northants Food Summit** – To be agreed at the next meeting.

2 members of the public left the meeting at 8:26pm.

377. To readopt the following policies with no changes – It was **RESOLVED** to readopt the policies

- a. **Records Retention Policy**
- b. **Complaints Procedure**
- c. **Sickness and Absence Policy**
- d. **Grievance & Disciplinary Policy**
- e. **General Privacy Notice**
- f. **Data Protection Policy**

378. To review and adopt the following amended policies:

- a. **Financial Regulations** – Defer to Finance Committee.
- b. **Standing Orders** – Defer to Finance Committee due to changes required to the financial aspects of the policy.
- c. **System of Internal Control and Internal Audit** – It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the policy with the amendments presented.
- d. **Health & Safety Policy** – It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the policy with the amendments presented.

379. To consider adopting the following new policies:

- a. **Biodiversity Policy** – It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the policy.
- b. **Data Breach Policy** – It was noted that the Parish Council (PC) already has a Data Breach Policy therefore this was not adopted.
- c. **Data Protection Policy** – Already covered under 377f.
- d. **Freedom of Information Policy** – It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the policy.
- e. **Subject Access Request Procedure** – It was noted that the PC already has a Subject Access Policy therefore this was not adopted.

- 380. Proposal to amend the Small Grants Policy to include a requirement for recipients to attend the following year's Annual Parish Meeting and provide a short presentation on what they used the grant for and how it has made a difference to their group** – It was agreed that rather than making it a requirement that they attend the APM and provide a report that they be invited giving them the option to provide a report. It was **RESOLVED** to add the following sentence to the end of Application Process section of the policy: Successful applicants will be invited to attend the following Annual Village Meeting to provide a report about how the grant has benefited their organisation.
- 381. To note the importance of all councillors using their .gov.uk parish council e-mail addresses and confirm which councillors need support in getting this set up** – Cllr Harris advised that he is not currently using the PC e-mail system due to technical issues. Cllr Moody, Cllr Plunkett, or Richard Farquharson can help with getting Cllr Harris set up. **Cllr Harris to arrange the support.** It was also noted that councillors should not be forwarding their e-mails to their personal e-mail account. **Cllr Marchant agreed to speak to Richard Farquharson to get the forwarding turned off his account.**
- 382. Approval and signature of the minutes of March 26th, 2025** - It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved and duly signed.
- 383. Matters arising** – After the publication of the agenda a plan was received from West Northants Council (WNC) regarding possible timber bollards to be placed around the wall at the entrance to the village from the B4525. The bollards are in the wrong place so the **PC Highways councillor will follow this up.** It was confirmed that the allotment related actions from the last meeting have been completed.
- 384. To receive feedback on the Annual Parish Meeting (APM) and note any matters arising** – It was noted this should be called the Annual Village Meeting (AVM) not the APM as although APM is the legal term AVM makes it clearer that it is not a PC meeting. PC Mo Mir did a presentation about crime in the area and gave parishioners some ideas about how to prevent vehicle theft and how to sign up to receive notifications from the police. The presentation from the Guides was well received and there were a number of discussions held through public participation.
- 385. Open Forum** (15min max, 3 min per person) –
Representations were made on:
- A parishioner advised that they believe someone is looking to sell their plot of the HOSLWS and would like to ask that the PC consider buying the land as it would be a good asset to the village.
 - HOSLWS Plot D owner gave information about the approved planning permission for a new access on the site and the DMMO application, and advised that they want to consider having a permissive path along the boundary of plot D and would like to speak to the DMMO officer and the PC about this.
 - Cllr Eastwood expressed her thanks to those who voted for her and noted that WNC is now a majority Reform Council. Cllr Eastwood thanked Cllr Marchant for his help in delivering leaflets for her. The 3 councillors elected will need to look after 31 villages so they will work out which villages each of them will be covering soon. A question was raised at the AVM was about where commercial vehicles can take their waste to try to reduce fly

tipping. Cllr Eastwood gave the details of the appropriate officer at WNC, which are available on request from the clerk.

- 386. B4525 (Welsh Lane) – Update on the request for further areas to be proposed for a 40mph limit** – Cllr Moody has contacted Steve Barber as agreed but unfortunately Steve has retired so the e-mail was forwarded to Helen Howard. A councillor suggested that a letter be sent to the CEO of WNC to complain about the fact that Helen Howard has said no to the extended 40mph limit. A vote was taken and the majority voted against writing to the CEO. It was agreed that **Cllr Moody should request a copy of the minutes of the meeting where the speed limit reduction was discussed and agreed** to see if more detail about their reasoning can be understood.
- 387. Update re contact with West Northants Council (WNC) Planning Enforcement regarding the dilapidated state of Priory Barn** – WNC have responded to say they are getting in touch with the owner of the property. It was agreed that the **Clerk should ask WNC to provide an update when they have heard back from the owner.**
- 388. Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the 2024-25 Financial Year**
- To review the effectiveness of the system of internal control** – It was noted that from a document point of view the PC has a firm system of internal control but that we need to ensure that we are aware of all of the requirements within our policies and ensure we are either fulfilling the requirements of our policies or the policies are amended to reflect current practice. It was **RESOLVED** that the PC is confident that we have an effective system of internal control.
 - To receive and note the recommendations from the Internal Auditor's Report 2024-25** – It was confirmed that the Internal Auditor's Report has been received and no issues were raised. The Clerk was congratulated.
 - To appoint an Internal Auditor for the 2025-26 financial year** – It was **RESOLVED** to reappoint NCALC as the Internal Auditor for 2025-26.
 - To approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2024-25** – It was **RESOLVED** to tick 'yes' to all statements except statement 9 which is 'not applicable' and for the document to be signed.
 - To approve the Accounting Statements for 2024-25** – It was **RESOLVED** that the Accounting Statements are accurate and the document should be signed.
 - To confirm the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights as 3 June to 14 July 2025** – It was **RESOLVED** to use these dates for the Exercise of Public Rights.
- 389. Finance:**
- To note the bank balances of £487.76 and £38,008.06 as at 29.04.2025** – The Chairman confirmed the balances stated are correct.
 - To review the Council's spend in 2024-25 using S137** – In 2024-2025 the council spent £2601.98 using S137.
 - To note and approve receipts and payments:**

Payments made since the last meeting using delegated powers/Direct Debits:

Date	Pymt type	Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
31.03.25		Unity Bank		Banking fee	£6.00
17.03.25	DD	Lloyds Bank		Credit card fee	£3.00
28.03.25	BACS	Kirsty Buttle	GB500TQMBP43VI	Reimbursement for allotment sign	£12.68
09.04.25	DD	Yu Energy	2000160507	Electricity March 25	£47.18

09.04.25	DD	Yu Energy	2000160509	Electricity March 25	£16.85
28.04.25	BACS	Various		Staff costs April	£865.45

Cllr Moody left the meeting at 9:19pm.

Invoices to be paid:

Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
Various		Staff costs April	£69.09
NCALC	Inv-4389	Annual membership, internal audit, and DPO	£763.06
Helmdon Community Foundation	477	Room hire Jan to Mar	£115.00
D Phillips	631	Play area repairs	£440.00
R&G	121612	Grass cutting March	£304.80
Various		Staff costs May	£934.54

Cllr Moody returned to the meeting at 9:20pm.

Receipts

Date	Payee	Description	Amount
31.03.25	Unity Bank	Interest	£113.23
21.03.25	Turner	Allotment fee	£20.00
01.04.25	Saunders	Allotment fee	£20.00
02.04.25	CCLA	Interest	£92.35
08.04.25	Fitton	Allotment fee	£20.00
08.04.25	King	Allotment fee	£20.00
14.04.25	Watson	Allotment fee	£20.00
15.04.25	Vincent	Allotment fee	£20.00
16.04.25	HMRC	VAT refund	£1,546.86
22.04.25	White	Allotment fee	£20.00
23.04.25	Spenceley	Allotment fee	£20.00
28.04.25	Luckett	Allotment fee	£20.00
28.04.25	Emberson	Allotment fee	£20.00
29.04.25	West Northants Council	Precept	£15,963.00

It was **RESOLVED** to approve all payments and note the receipts.

Cllr Hart left the meeting at 9:21pm.

- 390. To receive an update from WNC Planning Enforcement on matters related to the Helmdon Old Station Local Wildlife Site (HOSLWS)** – An update was provided at the AVM. One of the caravans on the site has been removed and one of the sites may be coming up for sale. A parishioner asked earlier in the meeting about buying that plot. It was noted that last time the land came up for sale it came with one wall of the Grange Lane Tunnel which brings a potentially expensive liability with it should there be any damage to the tunnel. The PC tried to find out what the liability would be and how much they would need to insure it for but couldn't find anyone able to provide that information. The PC could try again and maybe employ a structural engineer but this would need a lot of funds just to get the view from the engineer and it could go nowhere. The enforcement position was noted and it was agreed that any discussions regarding purchasing the site would be deferred until the site is officially up for sale.

Cllr Hart returned to the meeting at 9:27pm.

- 391. To receive a report and update from the Parish Plan Working Group –** 115 responses were received by the deadline given from 73 individual households responded from 350 properties.
- 392. Reading Room Welcome Pack update –** 10 packs have been printed by Texprep. Cllr Shepherd will keep the Welcome Packs.
- 393. To confirm the meeting dates and time for 2025-26 –** Ordinary meetings will take place on 25th Jun, 23rd Jul, 24th Sep, 22nd Oct, 26th Nov, 28th Jan, 25th Feb, and 25th Mar at 7:30pm. Finance Committee meetings will take place on 2nd Jul, 11th Sep, 13th Nov, and 8th Jan at 7:30pm.

Signed..... Date.....

Meeting closed @ 9:31pm.