



HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING



Minutes of a Meeting of Helmdon Parish Council held in the Helmdon Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon on **Wednesday 24th September 2025 at 7:30pm.**

Present: Cllrs Hart (Chair), Moody, Plunkett, Shepherd, Marchant, Sparrow, and the Clerk.

Members of the public: 4 members of the public present.

The Chair noted the sadness of the village at the loss of Richard Phillips who was integral to village life as the landlord of the pub.

- 440. To receive and approve apologies for absence** – Apologies were received from Cllr Fitzroy-Ezzy. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the apologies. Unitary Cllr Eastwood had also sent her apologies.
- 441. Co-option of new councillor** – It was **RESOLVED** to co-opt Billie Minshall onto the Parish Council. **Clerk to provide forms to Billie to be completed asap.**
- 442. Declarations of Interest** – None.
- 443. Approval and signature of the minutes of July 23rd, 2025** - It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved and duly signed.
- 444. Matters arising from the minutes**
 - a. Update re Cllr Harris and Cllr Marchant getting their e-mail issues resolved** – Cllr Marchant confirmed that his e-mails are no longer being forwarded to his personal address. It was noted that Cllr Harris has resigned from the Council so this matter can now be closed.
 - b. To receive an update on the actions agreed at the last meeting in relation to the Play Area** – The Working Group has met and topped up the bark chippings and cleared some vegetation. The **Clerk** has not been able to get quotes to complete the other repairs to the play area and **will try to find some new contractors to ask to quote. Cllr Sparrow to e-mail details of potential other contractors to the clerk.**
 - c. Update re request for improvements to the gravel path barrier** – Cllr Shepherd has contacted Highways to discuss this and they advised the following: 'Under the Disability Discrimination Act any new infrastructure that is installed must comply with specified standards and this includes the gaps between staggered barriers. Given the narrow width of the footpath in question it is not possible for us to change the existing layout of the barriers which are in place to comply with the current standards. The only option we have is to remove the barriers. There is no obligation on us to change all existing infrastructure to comply, it only applies to new, so we can leave the barriers as they are.' It was noted that the route the barriers are on is part of the designated safe route to schools and removing the barriers could create a safety risk for the children using the route to get to and from school. It was **RESOLVED** to advise Highways that the PC do not wish for the barriers to be

removed. **Cllr Shepherd to inform Highways of the PC decision. Clerk to write to the parishioner who raised the issue to explain the decision.**

- d. Update re request for a 40mph limit on the B4525** – The signage has now been installed on the B4525 so the new limit is now in force. The layby where the double yellow lines have been put in are still being used as parking and it was asked if there could be a request for enforcement of this. It was noted that there should already be enforcement but the signage appears to be inadequate. It was noted that the Chair and Clerk will attend the NCALC AGM on 4th October.

445. Open Forum (15min max, 3 min per person)

Representations were made on:

- Bus services – A resident made suggestions regarding surveying the village to find out if residents still want a bus service to inform any PC decisions on this. The resident noted that a service needs to be frequent in order to be well used.

- 446. To consider whether to instruct West Northants Council (WNC) to install 20 timber posts at a cost of £4,369.50 + VAT at the layby and wall at the entrance to Helmdon from the B4525 and to confirm what the ownership and insurance status of these posts would be once installed** – Defer to next meeting as no response has been received from WNC.

- 447. To note that Midlands Rural Housing would like to attend the October meeting to brief the Parish Council (PC) on the results of their recent Housing Needs Survey** – It was noted that a need for some housing has been identified so Midlands Rural Housing (MRH) would like to come to the next meeting to provide details of what that need is and what potential next steps would be. It was **RESOLVED** to note the request and for the **Clerk to make arrangements for MRH attendance on 22 October 2025.**

- 448. To consider whether the Parish Council should arrange for regular grass cutting on the verge opposite the school at a cost of £36 per cut** – The land in question belongs to Highways and it was noted that Highways have recently cut it. Highways have also confirmed that they cut the grass 3 times per year. It was **RESOLVED** to monitor the area and make a report on Fixmystreet if it appears to be getting overgrown.

- 449. To receive an update from the 20mph Working Group re the possibility of requesting a 20mph speed limit through Helmdon** – Cllr Hart gave the PC some information regarding the creation of the group, its purposes, and their remit. It was noted that Cllr Marchant had sent instructions to Highways in relation to a 20mph limit and new signage without first bringing proposals to the PC for consideration which does not follow due process. This process is in place to ensure all considerations about a project have been made before progression, including whether the project would conflict with any other projects being considered by other working groups. Cllr Marchant advised that he is resigning from the 20mph limit working group with immediate effect. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Plunkett, and Cllr Minshall should be appointed to the group, joining Cllr Moody. Cllr Marchant requested that his objection to all of the members being on the group be noted. It was also noted that residents can be part of the working group if so resolved by the council, and the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) Monitor would be asked for their input regarding changes to speed limits and a replacement VAS.

- 450. To consider a proposal to replace the dead tree at the top of Station Road** – The Copper Beech between the Jubilee Wall and the Welsh Lane planted

in 2023 has succumbed to the drought. It was **RESOLVED** to replace the tree with a Copper Beech at a cost of up to £100. **Clerk to order tree for delivery to Cllr Moody.**

- 451. To receive verbal report relating to school and preschool liaison** – Cllr Hart has spoken to Kim Sadler at the pre-school and she has advised that the pre-school is doing well in regards to numbers of children. They are looking for extra support to join their committee and support applying for grants, particularly as they need to get the perimeter fence next to the gravel path replaced.
- 452. To receive report from the Blackpits Monitoring Group** – The group usually react to complaints but there haven't been any complaints for the last 6 months. There is no further update re the late night vehicle movements discussed previously. It appears that the majority of these vehicle movements are tractors carrying maize and rye grass to the anaerobic digester so it was suggested that it would be helpful for residents to know what they are doing, when they are doing it, and how long it is going to last. **Cllr Marchant to try to get this information together and bring it back to the next meeting.**
- 453. To review councillor training needs** – It was noted that councillors on committees should ensure they have completed the relevant training and all councillors who haven't already should consider attending Off to a Flying Start training.
- 454. To approve the updated Risk Assessment** – Subject to changing 'lampposts' to 'property', and the addition of 'and will be taken down' at the end of section 13, it was **RESOLVED** to adopt the updated Risk Assessment.
- 455. Station Road Working Group (Parking)**
- a. To consider membership and appoint additional councillors to the group** – Cllr Marchant resigned from the group. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Hart and Cllr Minshall to the group.
 - b. To note issue with Land Registry and consider next steps** – There is a Restrictive Covenant on the land which needs to be removed before the PC can do anything with the land. This requires an RX4 that requires the person named in the restriction to ask for it to be removed. **Clerk and Cllr Hart to write to Amplus advising that as the seller they need to remove the restriction from the land with Land Registry. Amplus should also be informed that Helmdon PC does not currently have a solicitor representing it** to ensure they deal directly with the PC with no additional costs.
- 456. Parish Assets Councillor**
- a. To consider adopting a Parish Assets Councillor Role Description** – **RESOLVED.**
 - b. To approve the associated Assets Inspection Form** – **RESOLVED**
 - c. To appoint a Parish Assets Councillor** – It was **RESOLVED** that the **Clerk should complete the next check and the item should be brought back to the next meeting** to see if any of the new members of the PC are willing to be appointed.
- 457. To receive the External Auditor's Report for the 2024-25 financial year** - The report and details were thoroughly discussed and minuted at the Finance Committee Meeting. The report was noted. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been published.
- 458. Finance:**

a. To note the bank balances of £239.30 and £28,531.73 as at 17.09.2025

– The Chair confirmed the balances stated are correct.

b. 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
25.07.25	BACS	Playsafety Ltd	89677	Play equipment inspection	£100.80
25.07.25	BACS	Helmdon Community Larder		Grant	£400.00
25.07.25	BACS	Helmdon Church Council		Grant	£400.00
25.07.25	BACS	Helmdon Community Foundation		Grant	£280.00
25.07.25	BACS	Helmdon Guides		Grant	£380.00
31.07.25		Unity Bank		Account fee	£6.00
01.08.25	DD	ICO		Data Protection Fee	£47.00
08.08.25	DD	Yu Energy	02873297	Electricity July 25	£14.82
08.08.25	DD	Yu Energy	02873298	Electricity July 25	£38.54
26.08.25	DD	NEST		Pension August	£70.86
26.08.25	DD	Yu Energy	02950564	Electricity 1st to 12th Aug 25	£5.82
29.08.25	BACS	H.Tims Environmental Services	PumpWarGarden9	War Memorial and Pump Garden	£100.00
29.08.25	BACS	NCALC	INV-4778	Finance for councillors course - LH	£42.00
29.08.25	BACS	PKF Littlejohn	NH0124	External Audit	£252.00
29.08.25	BACS	R&G Grounds	121982	Grass cutting July	£304.80
29.08.25	BACS	H.Tims Environmental Services	PumpWarGarden10	War Memorial and Pump Garden	£100.00
29.08.25	BACS	Kirsty Buttle		Salary Aug and backpay	£840.43
29.08.25	BACS	HMRC		Tax and NI Aug	£175.29
29.08.25	BACS	Kirsty Buttle		SIM, and One Drive share, and mileage	£26.44
29.08.25	BACS	CPA Horticulture Ltd		Bark chippings for play area	£300.00
31.08.25		Unity Bank		Account fee	£6.00
08.09.25	DD	Yu Energy	02968525	Electricity August 2025	£39.14

Invoices to be paid:

Payee	Invoice No	Description	Amount
R&G Grounds	122077	Grass cutting August	£152.40
Clear Councils	LCO01676	Annual insurance	£931.22
Staff costs	N/A	September	£775.76
HMRC	N/A	Tax and NI Sep	£145.74
NEST	N/A	Pension Sep	£64.67

Receipts:

Date	Received from	Invoice No	Description	Amount
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04.08.25	CCLA	Interest	Interest	£107.71
02.09.25	CCLA	Interest	Interest	£104.52

It was noted that the Clerk's pay included back pay due to the payscales changing and a change to the calculation of pay based on weekly hours. It was also noted that the insurance policy invoice has been reduced to £898.16 since publication of the agenda.

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

- 459. To receive a report and update from the Parish Plan Working Group** –The Working Group are now analysing deeper into the data to try to pick out the topics of most interest to the residents and working out the appropriate prioritisation of the tasks. The items with highest numbers of responses have been prioritised. They now need to plot the next steps over a time frame as it is impossible to do it all immediately. They would like to work on a few quick wins to start with, initiate some medium term projects, and consider a vision for the longer term. There will be some recommendations that will need considering by the PC in future meetings. It was **RESOLVED** to note the direction of travel of the group and approve the summary table as presented.
- 460. To consider appointing a Parish Public Transport Representative** – Defer to next meeting as this ties in with the Parish Plan Actions.
- 461. To consider any actions to take to support the reinstatement of bus services** - Defer to next meeting as this ties in with the Parish Plan Actions.
- 462. E-mail scam awareness and diligence** – A discussion was held about issues with spoof e-mails and hacking of e-mail accounts. It was suggested that e-mail scam awareness is a big issue and could be a good subject matter for the next Annual Village Meeting. **Cllr Plunkett agreed to put together some information about how people can try to prevent getting hacked or scammed to be published on the website.**
- 463. To consider request from Cllr Harris for the PC to consider options to resolve the issue of him being unwilling to use his personal devices to access his PC e-mail account** – No longer required due to Cllr Harris' resignation.

Meeting closed @ 9:27pm.

Signed Date.....