

Homersfield Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING Homersfield Black Swan Tuesday 28th May 2024 at 6.25 pm

Councillors Present: Lucy Hammond (Chair), Debbie Bird and Ian Duffy

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO): Sally Chapman

Also Present: County Councillor Judy Cloke and one parishioner

A. To Receive Reports from the County & District Councillors'

No further reports

B. Public Forum – for Members of the Public

None

MINUTES

1. To Appoint a Chair

Lucy Hammond was Proposed and Elected unanimously as Chair.

2. To Appoint a Vice Chair

Councillors Resolved not to Appoint a Vice Chair as Homersfield is such a small council.

3. To Approve Apologies for Absence

Apologies were Received and Accepted from Councillor Stokes.

4. To Record Declarations of Interests and to Consider Requests for Dispensation

8. a) Planning Application - Cllr Hammond declared a pecuniary interest (homeowner).

5. To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th March 2024

The Minutes from the Meeting held on the 19th March 2024 were confirmed unanimously as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

6. To Consider Co-option to fill the Casual Vacancy

Councillors resolved unanimously to co-opt Mrs Lynne Elliott onto the Council and gave her a warm welcome.

Mrs Elliott signed the Acceptance of Office form and joined the meeting.

Councillor Duffy left the meeting at 6.32 pm.

7. Finance

a) To Approve the End of Year Accounts 2023/24

Councillors Approved unanimously the End of Year Balance Sheet 2023/24 (attached).

b) To Approve the Internal Auditor's Report for 2023/24

Councillors Approved the Internal Auditor's Report for 2023/24 and commented on the recommendations:

Summary of Recommendations (full report on the website)

Section 1 – Proper Bookkeeping – page 3

Comment: Council might wish to see the cashbook make reference to the powers used to incur expenditure.

Councillors discussed and Agreed if the RFO had time, she could add these.

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____

Homersfield Parish Council

Section 9 – Asset Control – page 11

Comment: It is noted that the declared value for all assets at year-end (31.03.2024) is £7,583 which reflects nil movement in the asset register although it is noted that the council received the gift of a memorial bench which has been entered into the register at £1.

Councillors noted the above comment is incorrect. It is clearly stated on the policy on the website:

New bench (£1.00) & litter bin (deleted - £1.00) Total £7,583

Section 14 – Additional Information – page 17

Is the Council compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements?

Comment: Council should ensure that there is a Privacy Statement on the website which covers the framework that the public can expect for dealing with requests from individuals who have the right to know what data is held on them, why.

Councillors discussed and Agreed to adopt a Privacy Statement.

Action: Clerk

Does the council have official email addresses for correspondence?

Currently, council uses a Gmail address for official business with councillors using their own personal emails addresses.

Comment: Council should consider the comments raised in the Practitioners Guide to Proper Practices (effective March 2024) section 1.26 which states that every authority should have an email account that belongs to the council and to which the council has access.

Councillors discussed and Agreed the cost of £213 per annum (SALC quotation) is too expensive and Resolved to set up a separate email with their own provider for council emails, perhaps adding 'pc' into the address line for easier differentiation.'

c) To Approve the Annual Audit Return Sections 1 & 2

Councillors Resolved unanimously the Annual Audit Return Sections 1 & 2 and the Chair and RFO signed the documents.

d) To Consider a Certificate of Exemption from a Limited Assurance Review

Councillors Agreed unanimously to certify themselves as Exempt from a Limited Assurance Review and the Chair and RFO signed the Certificate of Exemption.

e) To Appoint the Internal Auditor for 2024-25

Councillors Resolved unanimously to appoint an independent Internal Auditor for 2024-25, as they were not happy with the lateness of this year's SALC audit and the need for amendments to be requested.

f) To Receive the Financial & Budget Reports and Approve the Income & Expenditure

Councillors Resolved unanimously to Approve the following Receipts and Expenditure:

DATE	REFERENCE	DETAILS	RECEIPTS	EXPENDITURE
30/04/2024	credit	East Suffolk Council Precept 2024/25	£ 7,000.00	
29/04/2024	S/O	Clerk's Salary - April		£ 216.00
29/04/2024	credit	VAT Reclaim 01/04/2023-31/03/2024	£ 158.21	
28/05/2024	1	SALC Membership Subscription		£ 117.22
28/05/2024	2	Clerk's Expenses April-May		£ 45.83
		Total	£ 7,158.21	£ 379.05
		Reserves		
		General Reserves		£ 9,515.41
		Restricted Reserves		£ 2,351.74
		Total		£ 11,867.15

g) To Consider A Grant Request from Headway Suffolk

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____

Homersfield Parish Council

Councillors Agreed to carry this grant forward as they may receive other grant requests.

- h) **To Consider Homersfield Bridge Information Board Repair – update**
- i) The District Councillor has advised that he would consider a grant after the election, when they receive their new budgets for 2024/25.
- j) **New Bank Accounts – update**
The Clerk confirmed the Current and Saver Account were open and operating successfully.

8. Planning Applications and Decisions

Cllrs noted the following applications and decisions:

Applications

Cllr Hammond declared a pecuniary interest (homeowner) and did not comment or vote.

a) Planning reference: DC/24/1460/TCA

Proposal: 1 x Silver Birch (T1 on plan) - Reduce height by 1/3 and re-shape.

1 x Ash (T2 on plan) - Pollard to 1/3.

Site address: Mill Cottage, St Cross Road, Homersfield, Harleston, Suffolk IP20 0ET

Consultation letter expiry date: 14 May 2024

Status: Pending

Decisions

b) Planning reference: DC/24/0473/TCA

Proposal: Tree A Willow – Fell

Tree B Willow – Fell

Tree C Willow group – Coppice

Tree D Willow – Pollard

Site address: Mill Cottage, St Cross Road, Homersfield, Suffolk, IP20 0ET

Status – no objection

9. Homersfield's Playing Field – update

Councillors Agreed to have the Homersfield's Playing Field valued by a local land agent.

10. Homersfield Phonebox

Cllrs discussed inviting various local groups and charities to place a display in the phonebox.

Action: LH/Clerk

11. Homersfield Church Wood

a) New Benches

- Cllrs were informed that a new memorial bench has been placed in Church Wood and has been retrospectively approved. The bench has been risk assessed and will remain.
- Another memorial bench has been approved and will be installed in the near future.

Councillors Resolved unanimously a Church Wood Policy covering seating/benches needs to be adopted.

Action: LH/Clerk

b) Church Wood Meeting

Cllrs agreed that an additional meeting will be called to discuss forward planning for the wood.

Action: LH/Clerk

12. Village Maintenance

a) Blocked Drains on St Cross Road – update

The Chair confirmed the drains had been cleared.

b) Missing Duckboard on Public Footpath near Wortwell Mill

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____

Homersfield Parish Council

The Chair advised SCC have agreed to replace the missing duckboards.

c) Missing Church Lane Sign

The Clerk has reported the missing sign to SCC.

d) Nature Reserve White Posts – update

Not replaced as yet.

Action: Clerk

e) Jubilee Oak Tree Replacement – c/f

The tree will be replaced in the autumn.

13. Correspondence

a) Homersfield Village in a Valley Books – update

The Chair has received the books, which has been advertised in the Community News and will be offered on a book stall at the Village Fete on 3rd August 2024. They are free to parishioners.

14. AOB (For discussion only – the Council cannot make decisions on these items unless stated on the agenda)

a) No Parking by the Bus Shelter – update

The road markings and signs will be funded by County Councillor Judy Cloke and are due to be completed by 22nd July 2024

b) Speeding – c/f

c) The King's Portrait

The Parish Council has received a large portrait of the King, which will be displayed in the Church.

d) 'Bringing Back Nature - Biodiversity for Parishes' Webinar

The Chair provided a verbal report on this webinar, with a full report attached.

15. To Receive items for the next Agenda

a) Village Grass Cutting

b) Welcome Pack

16. To Confirm the Future Meeting NEW Dates:

- Tuesday 16th July 2024 at 6.00 pm
- Tuesday 17th September 2024 at 6.00 pm
- Tuesday 19th November 2024 at 6.00 pm

The meeting ended at 8.04 pm

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____

Homersfield Parish Council

Homersfield Parish Council Balance Sheet		
Year ended 31st March 2023-24		
	Receipts and Payments	
2022/23		2023/24
£	Receipts	£
4,700.00	Precept	5500.00
383.59	VAT reclaim	129.97
427.00	Grants/CIL Payments	55.00
6.07	Business Saver Interest	29.54
-	Lawnmower Sale	50.00
5,516.66		5,764.51
	Payments	
2,403.84	Clerk's Salary	2592.00
168.00	Clerk's Office Costs	168.00
118.52	Clerk's Expenses	107.40
35.00	ICO Data Protection	35.00
474.67	Insurance	491.40
150.00	Internal Audit	169.00
66.19	Maintenance	95.57
95.83	Miscellaneous	86.58
126.50	S137 Grants/Donations	219.98
138.49	Subscriptions	113.20
25.00	Training	60.00
-	Future Projects	0.00
1,295.00	Homersfield Wood	1063.29
-	Village Projects	0.00
50.00	Website Hosting	50.00
-	Daffodil Bulbs	55.50
129.97	Vat to reclaim	158.21
-	Bus Shelter Repairs	369.90
-	Election Cost	44.88
250.00	Village Map	0
5,527.01		5,879.91
(10.35)	Surplus income over expenditure	(115.40)
5,213.73	Balance b/f	5,203.38
-	Transfer to reserves	-
5,203.38	Balance c/f	5,087.98
	Balance Sheet	
	Cash at Bank	
2,416.75	Current Account	1,081.48
2,786.63	Business Saving Account	4,006.50
-	Petty Cash (none held)	-
-	Uncleared receipts	-
-	Uncleared cheques	-
5,203.38		5,087.98
2,350.58	General Reserves	2,736.24
2,852.80	Earmarked Reserves	2,351.74
5,203.38		5,087.98
The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the Authority as at 31st March 2024 and reflects its receipts and payments during the year.		
Signed	Lucy Hammond - Chair	
Signed	Sally Chapman - Responsible Financial Officer	

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____

Homersfield Parish Council

'Bringing Back Nature - Biodiversity for Parishes' Webinar Report

Bringing Back nature – Biodiversity – 24th April 2024

An interesting presentation by Rupert Masefield of Suffolk Wildlife Trust and Ella Warren Cooke of Norfolk Wildlife Trust

They presented ideas on

- How biodiversity fits into planning systems following the Environment Act.
- The role of the biodiversity metric and why a 10% net gain is just a minimum.
- Reassurances over the obligations for biodiversity reporting and auditing and what parish councils can easily do to improve the biodiversity value of greenspaces.

Why protect and enhance biodiversity?

- Reverse loss of wildlife
- Healthier ecosystems
- Clean air and water
- Resilient agriculture
- Healthier places to live and work
- Protect homes and business from flooding
- Habitats store carbon

Some points I found applicable to our work

- 1) Species in England have decreased in abundance on average by a third since 1970.
- 2) Use the Lawton principles – More, Bigger, Better, Joined up.
- 3) It is rare to prevent new estates/roads etc but we can use the many acts and legislations (including the Environment Act 2021) positively to enhance and improve the plans and surrounding area.
- 4) Consider enhancements such as bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways, hibernacula, invertebrate boxes and swift nest bricks.
- 5) Have biodiversity as an agenda item (use our biodiversity policy/plan as a tool) plus consider engaging with local wildlife groups. New Local Nature Recovery Strategy coming in 2025. Consider biodiversity as an opportunity not a burden. Manage our land for biodiversity.
- 6) There is funding, training, site visits etc available if we want to pursue ideas and need help. I have the details.

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____