**Hammerwich Parish Council Minutes**

**20 December 2023**

**Date: 20th December 2023 (Wednesday)**

**Time: 7:00pm**

**Venue: WI Hall, Hammerwich**

**In attendance:**

Councillors Greenway (Chair), King (Vice-chair), Grundy, Mears, Taylor and Ubhie

**Also in attendance:**

Councillor Janice Silvester-Hall from Lichfield District Council (LDC)

2 Representatives from 20’s Plenty

7 Member of the Public

**Clerk:**

Vivien Wang

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| **1.** | **20’s Plenty Presentation** | |
|  | Two representatives from 20’s Plenty presented a proposal for Hammerwich. The Council thanked their time and effort for delivering the presentation. Chair said a referendum from the whole parish would be needed if the proposal is considered.  (2 representatives from 20’s Plenty and 2 members of the public left the meeting at 7.30pm) | |
| **2.** | **Apologies for Absence** | |
|  | Apologies was received and accepted from Councillor J Smith and Councillor L. Leung of LDC.  **Noted and accepted.** | |
| **3.** | **Declarations of Interest** | |
|  | Chairman declared an interest relating to the renewal of ground maintenance service for she knew someone who is interested in submitting tender.  Cllr Grundy declared an interest relating to LDC, husband’s business asked to do work on behalf of the Council. She also declared an interest relating to the renewal of ground maintenance service as she knew someone who has submitted a tender.  Cllr Ubhie declared an interest that he is the owner of the property that affected by the flooding on Ashmall/Meerash Lane.  **Noted** | |
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| **4.** | **Approval of the minutes of 15 November 2023**  **The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 15 November 2023 was approved.** | |
| **5.** | **Matters Arising** | |
|  | Cllr King thanked Cllr Ubhie for his effort in liaising with Hammerwich Cricket Club on the settlement of St. George’s Day expenses.  **Noted** | |
| **6.** | **Chairman’s Announcements** | |
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|  | To avoid overlapping speech of councillors, Chair has reminded the Council to adhere to the rule of one person speaking at a time as per the Standing Order.  **Noted** | |
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| **7.** | **County/District/Police Reports** | |
|  | Councillor J Silvester-Hall (LDC)  Cllr Silvester-Hall updated that the Leisure Greenway project is now targeted for launch in late Spring 2024. She said she will ensure to include Cllr King and Taylor from HPC in the site visit. Chair has emphasized the importance of the safety of the bridge.  Regarding the racing on Burntwood Bypass, Cllr Silvester-Hall reported that usage of camera system is considered to monitor the situation.  Cllr Silvester-Hall updated that the LDC e-bulletin has been delivered to 30,000 households instead of print copies. She urged to share this information to those not registered.  Lastly Cllr Silvester-Hall wished HPC a Merry Christmas.  **Noted.** | |
| **8.** | **Planning Applications** | |
|  | 23/01183/FUH – 12 Burntwood Road: the case was amended and decided before the December meeting of HPC, hence no discussion needed.  23/01061/FUL – 159 Highfields Road: Mr. Macgregor (the applicant) was present and allowed to speak at the meeting. He said a letter addressing the parking concern from the Council had been submitted for consideration. **After discussion, the Council has agreed on “no comment” position towards this case.**  **Noted** | |
| **9.** | **Speedwatch**  SID: Cllr King updated that the fault in SID #5 had been fixed thanks to the help from the partner of Cllr Taylor. **The Council has asked the Clerk to prepare a thank you letter accordingly.**  30mph repeater at Hospital Road: Cllr Taylor reported that Chair and herself had met the officers from SCC on site but was told this was a low priority site due to low collision rate and funding issue. She said there will be another site visit in a couple of weeks but no solid date yet.  **Noted** | |
| **10.** | **Highways and Footpaths**  Flooding in Meerash Lane / Hall Lane: Councillors were asked to present their views in turns. i) Cllr Mears said HPC can’t carry out work on the land due to legal concern as per her consultation with Legal Officer from LDC; ii) Cllr Grundy said she is concerned on the uncertain amount of money HPC would have to spend; iii) Cllr Taylor said this is an issue about roads so should be the responsibility of SCC Highways. Hence, she has been emailing Highways on various flooding cases. iv) Cllr King said the council received regular complaints on the flooding of Meerash Lane which has now posed high risk on road users. After numerous parties (Highways, SSW, LDC, STW, SCC Flood Office) rejected their ownership to this issue, he supports HPC to act even not owning the land. He said this is in line with what HPC did for Projects SIDs, Speedwatch and Footpath in the past to serve the community. He then shared a quotation from a contractor who can dig the land and clear the blockage at a cost of £2,200. Further works (if needed) to be identified after this initial attempt of repair.  Chair said she had attempted to resolve the situation through House of Commons and was told to connect with DEFRA who then suggested HPC to check with Asset Protection Team from STW. Cllr King and herself had met the team from STW on site and was informed the drain under Meerash Lane is not linked up with the sewage drain at Hall Lane so STW is not in position to help. Chair said this is a long-standing situation that must be resolved ASAP.  The Council then went into a heated debate when requested by Chair for a recorded vote. Cllr Mears insisted the concerned land is owned by somebody so the Council shall not carry out work on it, while Chair said it was confirmed “unadopted” as per the search result from HM Land Registry. Cllr Mears, Grundy and Taylor disagreed on a recorded vote with Cllr Grundy saying she is not objecting but needs more details for consideration, and Cllr Taylor reiterating that she had worked very hard to report the problems to SCC Highways urging for their actions. Heated debate continued and Cllr Grundy had walked out of the meeting complaining it is disgraceful to be forced into a recorded vote.  (Cllr Grundy left the meeting at 8:25pm)  Standing order was then removed to allow members of the public to share their views.   * Mr. Steve Thomas from Ashmall commented that this problem is about the welfare of residents so shouldn’t be considered just based on money concern or rules. They had personally paid to attempt fixing the issue before approaching the Council. * Ms. Laura Silvester-Hall from 25 Hall Lane shared the serious problems and risks her family and visitors are facing due to the longstanding flooding. She wished this problem could be resolved the soonest possible. * Cllr J. Silvester-Hall shared a case from Wall Parish Council about how LDC had repaired a pothole on an unadopted road and how it was done for the welfare of the residents but not leading to claiming the ownership of the road. **She will share the details with Chair and the Clerk after meeting.** * Mr. Vance Wasdell (former HPC Chair) shared that the Council had hired Burntwood Roadsweeper to clear a blocked drain 2 years ago even though it was not owned by HPC.   (Member of Public Ms. Laura Silvester-Hall left the meeting at 8:40pm)   * Mr. Chris commented that the road condition is so risky now that an accident is waiting to happen. He questioned if there were ever an owner of the land, why he/she never complained about the Council putting up benches and signs there and maintaining it.     Cllr Mears then expressed that she had sought advice from LDC Legal and Monitoring Officers that it is not something HPC can pay for. She agreed this needs to be fixed, but the concern is how to fix it.  Cllr King reacted that he had never been told by LDC that HPC can’t spend money to fix this issue, and he suggested the Council to spend £2,200 attempting to fix.  Cllr Mears then said she believes Cllr Ubhie has a pecuniary interest in this issue which Cllr Ubhie confirmed he has no pecuniary interest in it. Cllr Mears requested this to be minuted.  Cllr King then proposed the Council to vote on spending £2,200 as an initial attempt to fix the issue, yet there was no one to second the proposal. Cllr Mears and Taylor were not seconding; Chair cannot be the seconder while Cllr Ubhie can’t be involved in vote as he has declared interest in this case.  Mr. Steve Thomas (member of public) burst out that he was very disappointed by HPC for the Council doesn’t know what they’re doing and seems not working to resolve proper issues.  Standing order was then restored. **Voting didn’t take place, so the Council has decided to discuss the issue again at the January meeting while waiting for response from SCC Highways.**  Fingerpost damage: Cllr King reported that the fingerposts were repaired and concreted, however then damaged again by vandalism. Police is now involved, and no repair will be carried out for the moment.  **Noted** | |
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| **11.** | **Parks and Open Spaces** | |
|  | Renewal of grass cutting service: The Clerk reported that a contract review meeting had been held between HPC (represented by Cllr King and herself) and Gary Brownridge of LDC Operational Services. Several saving options were identified, such as transferring a dog bin (Coppy Nook Lane) emptying cost to Burntwood Dragon, removing “collect” instruction from the Triangle Brook cut, and changing tree belt maintenance to upon request.  The Clerk had presented a comparison of grass cutting cost between LDC and the three tenders received. **The Council had resolved to stay with LDC for ground maintenance and grass cutting services.**     |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Vote Outcome: For: 5** | **Against: 0** | **Abstentions: 0** |   Scannable QR code and website: No update.  Oakfield Park new equipment: Cllr Taylor will be meeting supplier Kompan after new year to obtain identical quotations. Cllr King said Gary Brownridge from LDC had suggested to have a 5x5 football pitch as a cost-effective option.  Disclaimer notice to Ridgeway/Oakfield Park: The Clerk reported that the footpath is not registered in HM Land Registry as confirmed by the official search result. **Chair will check with LDC on the disclaimer/warning signage to be displayed there.**  **Noted** | |
| **12.** | **Approval of revised asset register** | |
|  | The Clerk has presented a revised asset register to include i) the write-off of strimmer; and ii) value of speedwatch device purchased back in 2015. **The revised asset register was approved.**  **Vote Outcome: For 5 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0**  **Noted.** | |
| **13.** | **St. George’s Day follow-up** | |
|  | Cllr King thanked Cllr Ubhie’s effort to liaise with Hammerwich Cricket Club (HCC). HCC had applied to HPC for a grant amount of £2,500 to settle HPC’s support to the St. George’s Day event, it amount was around 50% of the original claimed event cost. **The Council resolved to grant £2,500 to Hammerwich Cricket Club.**   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Vote Outcome: For: 3** | **Against: 0** | **Abstentions: 2** | | |
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| **14.** | **Correspondence Report** | |
|  | The Clerk had reported on correspondence received and sent since the last meeting:   * Precept 2024/25 was submitted to LDC * 7 inputs from parishioners regarding flooding at Meerash Lane / Hall Lane were received and shared to full council before meeting * Further to previous replies from SCC Highways, the reply from SCC Flooding team (Andrew Brett) was received insisting that the drain under Meerash Lane was a private one. * A complaint about the gully from Highfields to Lawnswood Avenue was received. It was an unadopted tarmac road which Cllr King had checked it is in good condition, so no action to be taken * Delay responses from SPCA is expected due to sickness of the Chief Executive. Besides, the training program of 2024 had been shared to full council. * Policing and Fire Rescue Service had launched Council Tax consultation ending 4th January 2024.   **Noted** | |
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| **15.** | **Accounts for payment**  **The Council had approved to add the grant to Hammerwich Cricket Club (£2,500) in the December Accounts for Payment.**  The statements for the Business Current Account and Savings Account as at 30/11/2023 were £37,869.49 and £8,357.15 respectively.  Councillors are asked to approve the following accounts for payment:   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Cost** | **VAT** | **Invoice No** | **BACS Ref# / Cheque Number** | | Clerks Wages – December + back pay | £782.09 | - | - | BACS  #467872148 | | WCAVA – payroll (November) | £6.6 | £1.10 | 4390 | BACS  #276880775 | | LDC – Play equipment repair (Mansion Drive) | £96.00 | £16.00 | M0075957108 | BACS  #947909364 | | Hammerwich WI Hall (venue hire for November) | £38.50 | - | 392 | BACS  #487265982 | | Staffordshire Signs – Dog bin signs | £78.00 | £13.00 | 54329 | BACS  #351861169 | | Staffordshire Playing Fields Assn subscription (2023-24) | £20.00 | - | - | BACS  #57430940 | | D. Hiley – footpath clearance and fingerpost repair | £330.00 | - | 58 (£250.00)  90 (£80.00) | Cheque  #1 | | LDC – annual ground maintenance | £11,795.19 | £1,965.87 | M0075960014 | BACS  #90761686 | | Hammerwich Cricket Club – Grant to St. George’s Day | £2,500.00 | - | - | BACS  #430158570 |   The Parish Council are asked to note the following income:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Source | Amount | Reference | | N.A. | - | - | | |
|  | **The accounts for payment were approved.**  A detailed budget monitor file has been shared by the Clerk.  **Noted** | |
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| **16.** | **Public Participation**  Mr Vance Wasdell said the flooding at Meerash Lane has been over 20 years. It will be a grace if the Parish Council can work on it. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.  Cllr Silvester-Hall said she had e-mailed the details of the Wall pothole case to Chair and Clerk for reference. |
|  | **Noted** |
| **17.** | **Items for consideration at future meetings**  There were no items for consideration at future meetings. Chair invited everyone to stay behind for mince pie and wine and wish all a Merry Christmas before closing the meeting. |
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Meeting closed at 9.29pm