

Hawstead Parish Council - Clerk report

21 November 2024

The aim of this report is to provide comments on agenda items and to update the Parish Councillors on:-

- correspondence received, sent and circulated since the last meeting
- Training attended since the last meeting
- Clerks' activity since September 2024
- Planning decisions

2.5 Suffolk constabulary [constables-county-september---online.pdf](#)

9.1 Co-option re casual vacancy

The vacancy has been advertised on website and Village Voice; clerk is not aware of any interest to date.

9.2 Honoraria

The Council has in the past agreed to make small financial gifts to volunteers (website/ litter picking) at this time of year. The Council need to decide what (if any) honoraria to award.

9.3 Grit Bins

JB to comment on his recent review of grit bins around the village.

9.4 Mowing contract

Two quotes received from:-

WSC (longstanding supplier) **£2,473.06 plus VAT**

TGS £1,600 plus VAT – query outstanding as to whether they have the appropriate equipment for this work

9.5 Transport Consultation

The Council needs to consider whether and how to make a corporate response.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan>

9.7 Bank Charges

Lloyds has announced banking charges for its communitiies account £4.25pm with effect from Jan 2025.

The Council needs to decide whether to seek an alternative bank.

Item 9.8 LGS Pay Agreement 24/25

The Local Government Services Pay award 24/25 was issued Oct 2024. This operates to increase hourly rates for relevant employees effective from 1 April 2024. The clerks pay is affected by these changes and the Council is contractually obliged to implement the pay changes (with effect from 1.4.24).

The Council is requested to note and accept the increased hourly rate.

Community Heartbeat Trust

Clerk has made preliminary enquiries as to training and cost; Hawstead has not yet had the training session (worth £175) associated with the purchase of the defibrillator at Pinford End (delay due to Covid). The Council needs to propose a couple of dates (early 2025); There will be no charge as this came as part of the original package.

The Council needs to propose some dates and identify at least a couple of councillors able to host the event.

10.1 Planning notifications

None received since the last meeting

11.4 and 11.5 Budget and precept request for 25/26

The Council has maintained a precept of £7,400 since 21/22. A slight increase of £200 to £7,600 is proposed for 25/26 – largely to counteract the likely decrease in grant income from DEFRA. This will be experienced as a 0.36% increase in council tax on Band D properties. Precept request can be adjusted if The Council decides otherwise.

Notes on proposed budget for 25/26

Defra grant is likely to reduce down to around £1k.

Use of just over £1k of reserves is planned to meet routine expenditure - if necessary.

Many of the payments are routine/ non-negotiable (subs, audit, defib parts, insurance).

An allowance has been on clerks pay to reflect the annual pay award

Greens allowance has been calculated on basis of WSC quote plus previously approved mole control costs.

£300 allowance for repairs (undertaken by volunteer group) has been made;

No allowance has been made for tree works as reserves are available for this;

£650 allowance has been made to cover the costs of maintaining the old and new websites, one of which is now in use as the village website; it may be time to close down the old email account which may yield some savings.

12. Correspondence

Indication is given where an item has already been circulated by email and/ or is under consideration at this meeting and /or has been circulated for this meeting. Please request copies of anything you have not received

Date	Detail	Action	Email circulation	Agenda item	Circulated with agenda
16/09.24	SALC bulletin		4.10.24		
16.09.24	HCC fun day report				
17.09.24	SALC bulletin		4.10.24		
20.09.24	Playground report				
20.09.24	WSC grass cut schedule				
20.09.24	Bus passenger interest group communication				
23.09.24	Salc bulletin		4.10.24		
25.09.24	Honouring Suffolk info		4.10.24		
27.09.24	OSS September updates: Our Path Paraphernalia information sheet Defending green spaces to the government A success in East Sussex		4.10.24		

27.09.24	ANPR rota for end 24		4.10.24		
27.09.24	WSC grass cut update				
27.09.24	Message of thanks re Macmillan grant			12.2	yes
30.09.24	SALC bulletin		4.10.24		
1.10.24	Promoting Safer Communities with Police & Neighbourhood Watch		4.10.24		
1.10.24	SALC training bulletin		4.10.24		
2.10.24	The Open Spaces Society: Open Space magazine autumn 2024 issue		4.10.24		
3.10.24	West Suffolk Town and Parish Forum information		4.10.24		
3.10.24	Correspondence with SCC re Whepstead road parking			12.3	yes
7.10.24	SALC bulletin		16.10.24		
8.10.24	Funding Opportunity: Launch of Communities Capital Grant Fund		16.10.24		
9.10.24	WSC planning confirmation that an enforcement file has been opened re Woodlands			12.4	yes
9/10/24	Letter from WSC confirming payment of tithe grant	Thank you acknowledgment sent 16.10.24			
9.10.24	Local Transport Plan for Suffolk to 2040 - Public Consultation launch https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/suffolks-local-transport-plan		1.11.24	9.5	
10.10.24	Air quality update to town and parish councils in West Suffolk		16.10.24 1.11.24		
10.10.24	RPA newsletter	To CC 16.10.24			
10.10.2	Suffolk Highways Suffolk Highways - Updates October 2024		16.10.24		
10.10.24	Correspondence with SB re timing of tree works -	Liaised with tree warden – instruction to proceed			yes
11.10.24	WSC update – Local car parks to get a boost with new electric vehicle chargers; Local car parks to get a boost with new electric vehicle chargers		16.10.24 1.11.24		
11.10.24	WSC Consultation on council tax reduction		16.10.24 1.11.24		
11.10.24	Grass cut schedule				
11.10.24	CAB appeal for funding		16.10.24 1.11.24		
11.10.24	Enquiry from architect re settlement boundary of PE	Referred to WSC 11.10.24			
15.10.24	Play area inspection report	Low risk findings		12.1	
18.10.24	Request for funds from East Anglian Air ambulance				
21.10.24	SALC bulletin		1.11.24		
21.10.24	CAS rural housing event info		1.11.24		
24.10.24	Precept form for 24/25			11	
25.10.24	NCJ pay award for 24/25			9.8	
25.10.24	Parish and Town forum notes		1.11.24		
28.10.24	SALC training bulletin		01.11.24		
28.10.24	SALC bulletin		01.11.24		
29.10.24	The Local Councillor		01.11.24		
29.10.24	Info re hedgerow management	To CC 1.11.24			
30.10/24	WSC quote for grass cut 25 26			9.4	
31.10.24	OSS newsletter		1.11.24		
7.11.24	Bus passenger transport group				
7.11.24	Winter toolkit from WSC	To Village Voice/Website 8.11.24			
7.11.24	Confirmation of community policing contact email: cpt.haverhill@suffolk.police.uk				
8.11.24	Top Garden Services quote			9.4	
11.11.24	Rough sleepers info		13.11.24		
11.11.24	Invitation to Carol service		13.11.24		
12.11.24	Play area report	Low risk findings only		12.1	
13.11.24	Footpath rep offer			12.6	

12.2 Letter of thanks re Macmillan Coffee morning donation 27.9.24

One of the organisers of this year's Macmillan, which took place today in the village hall, was absolutely delighted with our grant of £150. ALC who I believe made the grant application, wished to thank the PC.

12.3 Correspondence with SCC re Whepstead Road Parking – Oct 2024

JS to KS

You'll recall the issue of a lack of hardstanding for car parking effecting some of the properties in Whepstead Rd, Hawstead.

During the winter months the grassy area churns up and it can become an absolute quagmire. Some of the residents have no alternative but to park in front of their properties and then pick their way across the mud.

Certainly not ideal for mothers, toddlers with shopping etc.

At our last PC meeting I mentioned during the public forum that I'd decided to approach Havebury myself, in the first instance.

I met up with a couple of Havebury rangers who were most helpful and sympathetic. They provided the map of the area which I have found very informative.

The purpose of this email is to ask if you'd be prepared to meet up on site so that we can have another attempt to improve the car parking?

This won't be straightforward as 3 of the first 8 properties (numbered 1-8) are privately owned which complicates matters somewhat.

However the roadside strip of land is owned by SCC so if there is a will to do something there could still be a solution.

It would be sufficient to create a hardstanding area for extra parking.

After receiving the response as below from Havebury I had just about written this off however another resident of Whepstead Road said to me recently that the area in question is an "absolute eyesore" and something needs to be done.

This is my motivation for not giving up.

I feel they deserve better in 2024!

Shall we meet up and see if there is a way forward?

Havebury to JS

I have got the info from our map man

And it clearly shows the land in question is scc owned not hhp

After a discussion with my manager we can not take this forward

Due to it not being our land, I have included scc in this email, but I would suggest you reach out to them as well.

If you could get them out jack or myself would be willing to attend.

12.4 Email from WSC planning enforcement to K Soons

Dear Councillor Soons,

Thank you for your enquiry regarding landscaping work at Woodlands, The Pound, Hawstead. I have had a look into this for you and have found that we already have an open enforcement case on this property for which Andy Smith is the case officer. I have forwarded your note to Andy and we are looking to see what follow up is required relating to the tree planting and landscaping.

Email re tree work from SB 25/9

Hello Catherine

All good here thank you. October November December January and February are all suitable months. I'm flexible, when would you all like the work done?

Many thanks

Stuart

Clerk to SB re tree work 1 November 2024

Thanks for your message - please proceed with this work when you can.

I should be grateful if you could give James/me some notice and then we can between us make sure the two owl boxes are available to you.

18.10.24 HCC chair to Chair

12.5 Letter from HCC Chair to PC chair re drainage proposal 18 Oct 2024

Thank you for forwarding a copy of your report and thank you to the Parish Councillors who put in their time to assist.

Having now had the opportunity to read your report and to discuss it with members of Hawstead Community Council I find it necessary to respond.

The HCC proposal was finalised and submitted to the PC in July 2024 and which was mentioned under correspondence during the PC meeting on 22nd July 2024

The proposal was compiled by members of HCC, following extensive enquiries with regard to possibilities and probabilities, but based on expert advice and opinion by a nationally known company.

This extensive work was carried out in order to produce the proposal and to assist the PC with their ultimate decision of yes or no !

As Chair of Hawstead Community Council I am very disappointed that the Parish Council took some months to finalise their decision, given that much of the information they required was presented to them within our proposal.

I would hope that any future business between HCC and PC could be discussed and dealt with in a more timely manner.

Your report highlighted a number of observations by the working party presented to the Parish Council, which I presume was discussed by the full committee which then formed the content of your report.

I will address each observation by its number :-

1) The lines on the map appear to show the general fall of the land and how water would move slowly through the waterlogged village green.

We do not dispute the way the water will generally drain.

Not sure of the relevance of the point being made.

2) Not disputed, however when it was not very compacted, it also retained the water.

Our aim was to find a solution long term for the benefit of the village, which our proposal addressed.

3) Any scarring on the village green is temporary, as demonstrated by the photographs which you were shown, of an adjacent property where similar work was carried out 5 years ago.

Not sure if your working party had been instructed to physically inspect that work but it could have been made available should they had wished to.

Unclear why a drainage pipe would cause anything more than a temporary impact against vastly improved drainage within the play area, for the long term benefit of the village and its visitors.

HCC did not have a full survey carried out by the installer, so did not know where the pipe would run or where on the bank it would come out, therefore any suggestion of cutting through tree roots and endangering the trees wouldn't have been known.

Your comments suggest that you may have had a survey carried out yourselves by a professional body which gave you that knowledgeable information.

I would appreciate a copy of those findings.

My concern is that we took professional advice and guidance from an established drainage expert and at no time did the PC request a joint meeting with that company to allay any fears.

Perhaps this would have been a good opportunity to work together to address these concerns.

4) We strongly believe that any short term scarring is outweighed by the community benefit of a drained play area.

Again, evidence of similar work carried out within the village could have been inspected.

5) You state that rainwater from the village hall roof discharges into three soakaways within the mown area to the east of the hall.

Our enquiries, although suggest the same, have been unable to identify their exact location, have you had sight of any plans which would help ?

6) We discussed this with our drainage expert engineer and he identified that the play area is in a natural sump and any soakaway would quickly fill with water from the village green as well as the play area.

If we considered soakaways we would need to remove apparatus and replace same, making it more expensive.

The expert regards a soakaway to be a waste of money and ineffective .

7) This is already within our plans but we didn't want to do the work until we had confirmed if we could install a permanent drainage system first.

The proposal would have solved this issue for us to the benefit of the community.

8) It was always our intention to carry out this type of work once we had resolves the drainage issue, hence the urgency of our application to the PC

Our conclusion is there appears to be more concern for short term scarring and a trickle of outflow of water from the play area across the green and into a river rather than a permanent drainage issue to ease the flooding within the play area itself, and potentially the village green.

Email PC Chair to HCC Chair 5.11.24

The first meeting that I, in my capacity as Chair of the Parish Council, had with you and other members of the HCC about the problem of flooding in the playpark, was in fact way back in the early Spring. We met on site with a representative from a local respected landscaping and playground design firm. I thought we had all decided that the way forward was to install one or more soakaways in the middle of the playground, cover with membrane, and replace the composted wood chip with

free draining bark. You would have been able to go ahead with that course of action immediately as there would have been no need for further permission.

At that meeting we mentioned the drainage from the Hall roof as also being via a soakaway. I suggested that you ascertain where this was located, but you subsequently told me that it had been impossible to find out; nobody knew. When I approached those in charge of building the hall, however, they were clear that they had installed three soakaways under the close-mown area immediately next to the East side of the hall. These soakaways have worked perfectly all this time.

I was therefore surprised when the PC clerk reported that on 25 June you had requested that the installation of a drainage pipe across the green be added to our July agenda. Since you had not supplied any documentation, she wrote to you twice: first to ask for further details; and subsequently to advise you that the meeting was to be deferred until 22 July. Your reply to her arrived at 10.30pm on 16 July after the papers had been circulated, but even so contained no map or other details as to the nature of the work proposed.

Good governance requires that things cannot be decided upon by the PC a) outside of a formal meeting, b) if topics for discussion at that meeting have not been advertised to the public by being included on a published agenda, which must be circulated a week in advance and c) if there has been no time for members of the council to gather whatever information they need in order to come to an informed decision. The matter was therefore deferred to the September meeting.

The PC consulted DEFRA, and SCC regarding environmental regulations, and I then called a site meeting for a working party of councillors in early September. I circulated my report of that meeting for corroboration to all those who had been present, and it was distributed with the papers for the full PC meeting scheduled for the 12 September. The PC and our professional clerk acted entirely in accordance with proper procedure. There was no delay.

The PC did not commission a survey of the woodland. It was quite clear to all of us at the site meeting that any pipe would inevitably cut through tree roots on its way to an outfall anywhere along the bank of the stream. While the PC often carries out planned tree maintenance, we do not want any trees to be accidentally or collaterally damaged by a third party.

I recognise that the drainage company you have been talking to is well respected. But Christabel's map, using Environment Agency software, shows the underlying groundwater flow in the area, and does not indicate that the playground is sited in a 'natural sump'. Standing in the playground, one can see that although the cutting away of the turf in the centre has made the surface level there lower than its immediate surroundings, it is still higher than the surrounding green. A soakaway sited in the playground would not be draining the green! I understand from talking to others that there was no problem with drainage in the playground in the first few years despite that reduction in the surface level in the centre. The evidence therefore suggests that it is the composted, compacted, water-retaining mulch of successive layers of wood chip that is causing the problem.

The green is a county wildlife site. It has this status because only an estimated 1% of such grassland in existence before WWII still survives in this country. Its distinctive quality, arising from its complex mix of grasses and other flowering plants, also contributes to the HCC business model of 'the hall on the green'. It cannot be compared with a private field that has been sown with a modern grass species.

The Parish Council is always happy to work with the Community Council and indeed all residents to find solutions to issues that affect the village, but it cannot revisit the unanimous decision that was properly taken in September after considerable thought and investigation.

12.6 Correspondence from JW re footpath rep

Happy to help - our regular walks are:

Daily around the Green and by Hawstead Brook.

Occasionally up the footpath from the Green to the Pound.

Occasionally past the Church and via the Cranks (easily extended to include the path to Pinford End).

I know there's a short footpath from Church Road to Bull Lane but we don't use it as it involves road walking (whippets can get corns on hard surfaces)! That's not to say we won't check it out before meetings though.

I think that's it for Hawstead footpaths isn't it? Do let me know if there are any more.....

TRAINING

CLERK'S ACTIVITY October/November 2024

Date	Activity	Time
	Prepare for and minute Sept meeting 2024 ; follow up; bank mandate	
	Corresp	
	TOTAL	40.00