**24LHPC01b Little Horkesley Parish Council**

**MINUTES**

of the meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday 15th January 2024

Present: Jonathan Eddis (Chair)

Hannah Taylor

Susie Goldring

Tracy Le Grys

 Jo Petersen (Clerk)

**Apologies**

Lewis Barber

Darius Laws

There were no declarations of Pecuniary or Non-pecuniary interest.

# 1. Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting held on 20th November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

**2. Public Questions**

There were no members of the public present

**3. National Grid “GREEN” Pylons Scheme**

1. Cllr Eddis and Cllr Goldring did not have any significant updates to report.

**4. Playground**

1. Cllr Eddis confirmed that he has not heard back from Michael Devine in response to his email of 29th November, which was chasing a response to the email sent to Mr Devine on 6th September.

Neither the clerk nor Cllr Eddis have received a response from Mr Devine.

The owner of 7 Orchard Cottages removed the fence at the rear of his property and installed a gate with access to the playing field. The fence was the property of Little Horkesley Parish Council and its removal left the Parish Council in breach of their lease agreement with Colchester City Council.

Rather than erect a new fence it was suggested by Colchester City Council that a licence could be drawn up, in effect giving permission for the gate.

The Parish Council had contacted the owner of 7 Orchard Cottages in September informing him that we would require him to enter into a licence agreement for the brick wall and access gate that he built. If he failed to do so then the Parish Council would be obliged to erect a fence in front of the gate to prevent access in accordance with the Parish Council’s lease agreement with Colchester City Council.

The Parish Council has not received a response from the owner of 7 Orchard Cottages and it was decided to pursue the licence option as a resolution to the issue.

Cllr Eddis subsequently contacted Mr Devine requesting that he draw up a licence and send it to the owner of 7 Orchard Cottages. We are still awaiting a response despite follow up emails.

The clerk will try and provide Cllr Eddis with a telephone number for Mr Devine so he can contact CCC to discuss.

It was also agreed that the clerk would try to obtain quotes for installation of new fencing in case the licence is not agreed.

1. The clerk informed that Parish Council that she has been contacted by Enovert regarding a query over the lease terms of the playing field.

The clerk had contacted Sarah Dagba, a Paralegal at CCC on 7th September asking for confirmation that the lease will be renewed on 1st July 2026 for another term of 10 years.

The clerk had not received a response so contacted Ms Dagba, who informed the clerk that the issue had been referred to Michael Devine. Ms Dagba confirmed that she will ask Mr Devine to contact the Parish Council as soon as possible with confirmation that the lease will be renewed.

1. The Clerk has not yet contacted Monkey Challenge regarding a climbing wall but will do so before the next meeting.
2. It was noted that all trees available through the “Tree Initiative” had been allocated and so there were none available.
3. The oak tree at the playing field was discussed at length. Cllr Eddis met with a tree specialist (Walton Tree Services) and given that the tree does have a few cavities and has been pollarded in the past, he could not give the assurance we need that the tree is completely safe.

It was agreed that there are 3 possible options for maintenance:

* Employ a tree agency for an official assessment (approx. £500)
* Have the tree pollarded (previous quotes range from £680 to £1,300)
* Fence off the area of the playground which is under the tree.

It was decided that the Parish Council would arrange to have the tree pollarded. Cllr Eddis will speak with Walton Tree Services and arrange a quote.

**5. Roads, Verges and Footpaths**

1. Following extensive research, the clerk was unable to establish which landowners were responsible for which ditches. It was therefore agreed that a letter would be sent to all known landowners requesting that they remind their contractors to keep ditches clear in order to reduce flooding.

One area of concern are the fields to the North of School Road and the Parish Council is unsure who is responsible for these ditches. Cllr Eddis will ask a local farmer if he knows the owner or contractor of these fields.

The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted Cllr Barber about the acquisition of a “Flood” sign that Cllr Taylor could deploy on Water Lane when the need arises. He will make enquiries to see if there is funding available from the Local Highway Panel.

**6. Bus Shelter**

1. The clerk is currently waiting for a quote from Get It Done for the renovation and repair of the bus shelter. They have looked at the bus shelter and required clarification on the number of boards that need replacing. It was noted that the panel at the rear had degraded due to a build-up of earth. The Clerk will send photos and further details.
2. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council had received the £500 grant from Love Essex for the purchase and installation of a cupboard in the bus shelter for the Little Horkesley “Book Swap” initiative. The Clerk will research the most suitable cabinet and update all Councillors before purchasing.

**7. Dog Waste Bin**

The issue of a dog waste bin was discussed at length.

Following advice from Mark Healy, the Community & Partnerships Officer at Colchester City Council, all Councillors agreed that the Parish Council would not fund the installation of a specific dog waste bin.

Mr Healy advised that dog bins are collected at the same time as litter bins and disposed of at the same collection point. There is, therefore, no need to have two distinct types of bins. Signage will encourage dog owners that dog waste can be disposed of in the litter bin. Colchester City Council will not be installing dedicated dog waste bins in the future and those currently in situ will be phased out, ensuring that a litter bin is available within proximity of existing litter bins.

It was agreed that Parish Council would be happy to fund a litter bin to be located within the vicinity of the Village Hall if a suitable location can be agreed with both local residents and the Village Hall. The Parish Council will wait to hear from the Village Hall Committee if a location can be agreed.

**8. Planning**

1. The Clerk confirmed that she had made a “no objection” comment on Planning Application 232804 on behalf of the Parish Council.

**9. Budget**

1. Further to a change in the Tax Base from 90.6 to 88.4, the previously agreed precept request was amended to include an increase from £100 to £200 of Parish funds. This would maintain the 1% decrease on the Council Tax for Parish Purposes. The clerk will submit the precept request this week.
2. The clerk noted that she has been contacted again by Barclays Bank regarding the issue with the classification of the Parish Council bank account. After discussions with Barclays Bank it was confirmed that the issue had been resolved and to disregard the latest correspondence.

**10. Items for the Next Agenda**

* Ditches – contact any updates from Anglian Water on the ditch on Water Lane.

**…………………………………………………………………………….. (Jonathan Eddis - Chair)**

**18.01.24**

# ……………………………………………………………………………… (Date)

**Date of the next Parish Council Meeting Monday 18th March 2024 (Little Horkesley Village Hall)**