



Highwood Parish Council

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on
Monday 20th May 2024 at
Village Hall, Highwood, Essex**

MINUTES

- 1 The Parish Council Chairman, Councillor Peter Latham, welcomed those present.
- 2 Report from the Chairman (attached to these Minutes).
- 3 The following question was received: How long is the Speedwatch training course? The response: It is about an hour, online, concentrating on the health and safety aspects.

The meeting closed at 7.22pm

Report from Councillor Peter Latham

During my year as your Chairman, I am pleased to present a roundup of this period, financials and the activity of us all.

Up to date accounts once again show that the Parish Council continues to act in the interest of all residents and are dedicated to satisfying the needs of Highwood, currently holding a health balance of £160,000.

Current and past projects included a new bus shelter, vehicle activated speed signs, maintenance and improvements to the Edney Common play park. We currently are aware of walkable verge issues, potholes and overgrown hedges. This is not unique as most other villages are suffering too.

Our issues are all continually reported, but as always, Chelmsford City Council funds are limited.

Highwood Parish Council has a grant policy in place to support those looking to enhance the village aesthetics, activities or any project that is compliant with the policy. So, I ask anyone to read the policy and we can look if the project is something we can assist you with.

To benefit all in Highwood, the Council maintains several grass verges and continue to grant funds to St Paul's Churchyard and Highwood Primary School PTA.

The village as a place to live

The Parish Council encourages healthy lifestyles for all with two play parks, each unique in the equipment available. However, the one at the rear of the village hall has gym equipment and a table tennis table. We will endeavour to make the Edney Common play park more easily accessible.

Communication and feedback are so important, and facilities are available through the website and Facebook to let us be made more aware. The magazine always requires comment or entries so please share what you know or need to know. Please use them to stay in touch remembering that our new Clerk will be happy to receive your emails.

Allotment site

The allotment site at Radley Green has been sold and funds earmarked for CCTV throughout the Highwood area as both a precautionary measure and retrospective viewing for evidential use. The installation is on hold awaiting site approval.

Keeping safe

I mentioned the play parks and the Parish Council remain aware of the difficulties with safe access to Edney Common and the verge, or lack of it. The problem is under constant review as is the safe walk between the bus stop and St Paul's Church.

We are currently looking at improvement options, but may need to contribute funds.

The play park at the Highwood Village Hall continues to be used and we are pleased that the fencing gives all adults the security of their children and off-road parking seems to be well used. New fencing is just being installed at the Edney Common play park, keeping kids in and undesirable wildlife out.

Councillors

Thanks as always must go to all the Highwood Parish Councillors and those that act as representatives of the Village Hall committee and Highwood Primary School. The depth of knowledge within those sitting as your Parish Council ensure a balanced view of all expenditure and projects.

To ensure that the communication lines are maintained Councillor Steve Maclean is active with the new magazine and keeps a very careful watch on the play parks, reporting back to the Council. His knowledge of communications infrastructure is endless.

Councillor Kelly Latham-Pearmain is the liaison officer with Highwood Primary School, complementing her role as Chair of the PTA, allowing feedback in both directions.

Garages

All the garages are now in private hands and funds achieved we consider can be better used.

Litter Pick

I am personally indebted to those that litter picked at the organised event, which had an amazing turnout and the volume of rubbish collected is testament to why the CCTV project is paramount. Thanks also to the many that either go out to collect or simply pick up litter on passing. This is invaluable to the tidiness of our village.

Remembrance

It was once again a moving service, and our Vice Chairman Councillor Trevor Horsnell laid the wreath at the memorial on behalf of not only HPC, but being there to represent the whole of the village's residents.

Speeding Vehicles

It will come as no surprise that a limited Speedwatch activity is only possible with the few trained volunteers. Fortunately, the Policy Community Speedwatch teams currently arrange a surround the town session which we always try to be part of.

Parish Magazine

The magazine continues to improve in design and content with enormous thanks to Councillor Steve Maclean for a very professional end result.

Speed Indicator Devices

The one device draws attention to the actual speed and hopefully drivers become more aware, however, the siting of the second SID is again falling under the same approval banner as the CCTV. The use of lampposts requires a suitability report and, as I said earlier, the health and safety of all in the village or visitors remain best protected.

CCTV

This is under constant review and HPC now has a wealth of information, including costs, but required siting approval as I mentioned. However, with the asset sales this will be totally self-funded.

Current projects

As Chairman, I have been particularly active in the fight against the siting of the pylons and studied the Hiorns report which was instigated by those Councils affected; it makes for good argument.

At this stage of political uncertainty, it is doubtful that the project will move forward very quickly, which does continue to affect the public perception of the potential blight on the landscape and the Hiorns report threw a spanner in the works, indicating that this will roll on for many years and the costs changing.

With the safety of all those in the villages, the 20's Plenty campaign is still active and I again work closely with other groups to try at least to get the speed limit reduced at the Primary School.

Help and Support

I am pleased to have been appointed Chairman and with my fellow Councillors, we remain active in debate which makes for balanced decision making. Thanks indeed to Mike Steel from Essex County Council who has been particularly active and his never-ending support and indeed I am pleased that our Clerk, Sarah Gaeta, joined us. Her professionalism and dedication have been much appreciated by us all.