

**Minutes of the Meeting of Haigh Parish Council
Held Monday 22 January 2024
6:30pm via MS Teams**

Present: Councillors Paul Kenyon (Chairman), Andrew Keogh, Roberta Darbyshire, Ian Parker, Andrew Wilson and Marie-Clare Kenyon
The Clerk to the Council: Mrs Krystyna Pilkington

109 Apologies for Absence

None

110 Declaration of Interests

None

111 Matters Introduced by Members of the Public

None

112 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council (4 December 2023)

Resolved: The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Monday, 4 December 2023 were agreed to be a true and correct record.

113 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

114 Planning Applications

A/21/92629/MAJOR	Leyland Mills Leyland Mill Lane Wigan WN1 2SB	Residential development of 17 two & three storey detached dwellings following demolition of former mill buildings	<i>Objection sent – decision deferred subject to submission of revisions by September 2023 deadline</i>
A/22/94184/FULL	Rothwell's Stud Sennicar Lane Wigan WN1 2SN	Erection of four detached dwellings, following demolition of indoor riding arena, stables and store	<i>Objection sent - awaiting decision - non determination appeal dismissed by Planning Inspectorate</i>
A/23/96328/VAR	Mowpin Lodge New Road Haigh Wigan WN2 1PF	To vary condition 2 of Planning Permission Reference A/23/94895/LA - to alter the extent of the new hard and soft landscaping adjacent to Mowpin Lodge gate	<i>Noted</i>

A/23/96413/VAR	Mowpin Lodge New Road Haigh Wigan WN2 1PF	To vary condition 2 of Listed Building Consent Reference A/23/94896/LBLA - to alter the extent of new hard and soft landscaping adjacent to Mowpin Lodge gate	<i>Noted</i>
----------------	---	---	--------------

A/21/92629/MAJOR

It had recently been brought to the Chairman's attention that trees had been cut down and a large sewage disposal tank had appeared on site. To date there had been no indicators that a decision had been made on the application. In view of this an enquiry had been sent to the officer listed on the planning website to establish whether there had been any further developments in the process. If not, clarification about why trees had been cut down and preparations made to install a Klargestep septic tank system had been sought. A response from the planning officer was still awaited. The Clerk was asked to chase this up.

The Chairman reported that since then another Klargestep system had appeared on the site. Further enquiry had established that Fur Clemt were currently using one of the newer buildings on the site for storage purposes and the Klargestep system was intended for them.

Cllr Bobbie Darbyshire joined the meeting.

The Clerk was asked to write to Wigan Council's Trees & Woodlands officer to find out whether permission had been sought and given for the trees to be felled.

Tent Pegging Arena

It was reported that to date nothing had been removed from the field in Pendlebury Lane. There was speculation that the owners may have been given a certain amount of leeway because of the weather and ground conditions. The Clerk was asked to write to the Planning Department to ask them why there did not appear to have been a further response from enforcement officers.

115 Annual Parish Meeting

(a) Cllr Clare Kenyon reported that she had written to AI&AI about the possibility of their providing an update with regard to the Masterplan to the Annual Parish Meeting. She had asked them to select any Tuesday in May. As Haigh Hall would not be available, she had asked whether they could arrange for the meeting to take place in the Stables Classroom.

(b) To date one nomination for a Community award had been received. It was anticipated that there could be two or three. As the Annual Parish meeting would now only be taking place in May, it was agreed that the deadline for nominations would be extended to the day before the Council meeting in March. It would be advertised on Facebook, in the newsletter and on the notice board.

116 2024 Newsletter

It was reported in 2023 that residents very much appreciated receiving a printed copy of the newsletter and the fact that it was being delivered to their homes. It was agreed that the 2024 newsletter would be published at the end of February.

The newsletter's possible contents were discussed. They would include information about the Bubblefest and an appeal for volunteers. Cllrs Bobbie Darbyshire and Andrew Wilson were asked to co-ordinate the content and Cllr Andrew Keogh was asked to prepare the layout. Delivery would be undertaken mostly by volunteers. It was suggested that copies intended for hard-to-reach addresses should be delivered by post.

117 Meeting with Wigan Council Officers

(a) The minutes of the meeting with Wigan Council officers on 12 December 2023 had been previously circulated. Members who had attended the meeting provided feedback.

The following observations were made:

- A survey had been carried out which had identified a number of dead ash trees within falling distance of Wingates Road. A land registry search had subsequently been undertaken to identify the landowners and advise them to have the relevant trees surveyed and to take any appropriate action. It was essential to ensure that this happened.
- There had been no update on the joined-up bridleway project.
- A meeting between Canal & Rivers Trust, Wigan Council and Haigh Parish Council personnel had been set up to discuss the way forward with regard to canal towpath improvements between Arley and New Springs. It was due to take place the following week.
- The car park at Haigh Woodland Park was due to be upgraded, but there had been no mention of upgrades to the equipment.
- Floating duckweed on the canal was a problem because the nutrients it needed to thrive were being provided by effluent from a local farm. The Canal & Rivers Trust owned a boat from which they worked to remove the duckweed.
- The blocked culvert and drainage system on Sennicar Lane had been cleared.

(b) The next meeting with Wigan Council would be via MS Teams at 4pm on 18 March 2024. Members were invited to put forward and agree agenda items for the meeting. The following were suggested:

- Joined-Up Bridleway
- Improvements to the Canal Towpath Between Arley and New Springs
- Upgrade of Car Park Entrance Equipment at Haigh Woodland Park.

The Clerk was asked to find out whether the meeting could take place face-to-face.

118 Grit Bin for Hall Lane

Following the meeting with Wigan Council officers in December the Parish Council wrote to the Director of Environment to raise concerns about the lack of gritting by Wigan Council in the vicinity of Hall Lane. In his reply the Director of Environment had explained that the area in question was classified as an unadopted highway and

by definition Wigan Council did not have any jurisdiction to carry out any maintenance or accept liability attributed to this area.

However, in order to support the activity, Mr Barton was happy to provide the Parish Council with one of the green grit bins that were available to purchase usually by community and residents' groups. He was happy to provide the grit bin free of charge and include the initial stock of grit salt. But this was on the understanding that the Parish Council took on the responsibility for its upkeep and arranged for the grit bin to be restocked as and when required once the initial stock that Wigan Council would supply had been exhausted.

It was reported that Wigan Council would arrange delivery once the Parish Council had confirmed the exact location where the grit bin would be sited.

Since receiving the above reply the Chairman, following consultation with members, had obtained permission in writing from the owner of a grass verge in Hall Lane to site the bin on a portion of the verge on the basis that the owner of the verge would have no responsibility for the bin.

Three members had created a flagged area on the verge where the grit bin would be located and a risk assessment would be carried out. The grit bin had been ordered. The Parish Council's insurers would be informed and asked to include it on the Parish Council's schedule.

There was a short discussion during which it was reported that personnel from one of the stables in Hall Lane had gritted the road along the horseshoe bend so that it could be used during the recent cold snap. The Clerk was asked to write to them to thank them.

Resolved: The Council approved the project retrospectively.

119 Canal Towpath

The Chairman provided an update on progress with the canal towpath repair project. The focus was on the stretch of towpath in Haigh Parish that ran from Arley to New Springs. Cllr Paul Kenyon had spoken to a contact who had been involved with a similar project in Chorley. The contact had informed him that Chorley Borough Council had awarded the project a grant to the value of £22,500 and the Community Payback Scheme had provided the labour. £15,000 had been spent on materials so far and 2.5km of towpath had been upgraded. It was estimated that with the balance remaining a total of 4km could be upgraded.

The Chairman had carried out a visual assessment of the condition of the towpath in Haigh and had categorised various stretches as below:

1. Arley to Red Rock (1km) – very poor
2. Red Rock to Pendlebury Lane (2.5km) - not too bad
3. Pendlebury Lane to Sennicar Lane (0.5km) – variable
4. Sennicar Lane to Haigh Country Park (0.5km) – variable
5. Haigh Country Park to New Springs (1km) – very poor

In Cllr Paul Kenyon's estimation 3km badly needed to be upgraded. Based on the information provided in relation to the upgrade in Chorley, it was suggested that approximately £20,000 would be needed to cover the cost of materials.

The meeting referred to under Item 117 had been scheduled for Wednesday, 31 January. It was due to be held via MS Teams. It was reported that quite a few of

Wigan's ward councillors had shown an interest in towpath upgrades and all of Aspull's ward councillors had been invited to the meeting.

120 Grant Awarding Policy Review

The Parish Council had adopted a Grant Awarding Policy on 21 February 2013. This Policy was reviewed and discussed.

Paragraph 5 of the 2013 version of the Policy read:

"The size of any grant awarded is at the discretion of the Parish Council but will not exceed £250 in any one application." It was proposed that paragraph 5 should be deleted.

Resolved: Members agreed that paragraph 5 should be amended to read: *"The size of any grant awarded is at the discretion of the Parish Council."*

121 Community Grants 2024

Following the review during the last Council meeting of the funds currently held in the General Reserve, several proposals had been put forward. The aim was to distribute part of the current general reserve to worthy local causes and at the same time provide publicity for the important work of the Parish Council in the local community.

The proposals were discussed. During the discussion Cllr Clare Kenyon reported that she had a list of other grant funding pots and would provide them to the Council.

Resolved: The Council agreed that local groups would be invited to bid for community grants. There would be no upper limit on the size of grant for which a group could bid. The deadline for bids was set at 31 March 2024 and the award of grants would be made at the Annual Parish Meeting (date to be confirmed).

A decision about the amount to be allocated from the General Reserve to "Community Grants 2024" was not made at this time.

122 Haigh Community Group

The 'Participatory Budgeting reserve' was discussed briefly. It was agreed that the status quo with regard to the amount allocated and the way it was to be distributed should be maintained.

The funds in the reserve were intended to be used on Vocal Eyes projects. The Vocal Eyes platform currently had 47 members who were eligible to vote on which project(s) should be taken forward. Only two of the projects on the current list required funding: the Christmas tree (and other Christmas decorations) for Haigh and the pic-nic area. The Christmas decorations were discussed.

The Vocal Eyes platform had been dormant for a little while and it was agreed that Cllr Clare Kenyon would awaken it. Cllr Andrew Keogh had been working on the Christmas decorations and this would be looked into further.

123 Haigh Windmill

It was reported that the windmill's security door had been damaged during the recent spate of vandalism, which had taken place on the same night as the damage to the

signage and uprooting of the litter bin at the junction of New Road with School Lane. The door was quite strong and had done the job it had been designed to do, which was to prevent further entry. It was in need of repair and Wigan Council, who owned the windmill, were dealing with the matter.

124 Bridge 63

Bridge 63 (the former Crawford Arms) had ceased to be actively used and had become derelict some years ago. It remained derelict and concern about the condition and the future of this building (which, as a former coaching inn, formed an important part of the heritage of the Parish) was growing. Members received a briefing paper about the situation and discussed the matter to see if there was any route the Parish Council could follow to prevent the building's further decline.

Resolved: Cllr Andrew Keogh would draft a letter, which would be sent via the Clerk to the building's current owner, who would need to be identified via a Land Registry search.

125 Accounts 2023/24

Income: £Nil

Expenditure:

No	PAYEE	NARRATIVE	NET	VAT	PAYMENT
40	Employee No.1	Salary (Dec &Jan) (net)	£632.72	N/A	£632.72
41	HMRC	Tax (Dec & Jan)	£158.20	N/A	£158.20
42	Employee No.1	Mileage	£ 5.20	N/A	£ 5.20
TOTAL:			£796.12	£0.00	£796.12

Resolved: The above items were approved for payment.

Balance at bank on 31 December 2023 = **£23,706.33**

Estimated balance at bank following payment of Items 40 to 42 = **£22,910.21**

126 2024-25 Budget & Precept

The proposed budget and precept for 2024-25 were discussed. Due consideration was given to the reserves. It was reported that Wigan Council would once again be providing a Council Tax Support grant, which had been increased to £1,079.

Resolved: The Council approved a budgeted expenditure of £13,929 (including an expenditure contingency of £500) and set a precept of £8,400 for the financial year ending 31 March 2025. The total reserves were estimated to stand at £17,107 on 1 April 2024.

In the past there had been many years when the Parish Council had either only increased the precept by small amounts or not at all. As a result it had not been sufficient to cover routine expenditure, which consequently had to be subsidised by increasing amounts of reserves. Since 2021 depleting reserves had been increased by holding Bubblefests.

The precept for 2024-25 was increased by a percentage much higher than the rate of inflation because members were of the view that

- the precept levied should be sufficient to cover routine expenditure;
- routine expenditure should not be dependant on holding a Bubblefest;
- surpluses from the Bubblefest and other events should be used to fund projects within the Parish.

127 Text for Council Tax Letter

Members discussed suggestions for the nature of the text for inclusion in the 2024-25 Council Tax letter. It was agreed that the Chairman would prepare this and circulate it to members for agreement.

128 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reported that the date of the Bubblefest working group meeting needed to be arranged. After a short discussion it was agreed that the meeting would take place via MS Teams on Wednesday, 31 January at 7pm.

129 Date of Next Meeting

25 March 2024 at St David's Parish Rooms.

The meeting closed at 9:55 pm
Chairman