

UPWOOD AND THE RAVELEYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Upwood and The Raveleys Parish Council
held in the Village Hall on Monday 5th September 2011.

Councillors present: Mr. R. Brown, Mr. C. Bryce, Mr. M. Horwood, Mrs. J. Paxton (Chairman), Mr. A. Perkins, Mrs. P. Rignall, Mrs. G. Shelford and Mr. K. Sisman.

Also present: Mrs. D. Benham (Acting Parish Clerk), District Cllr. R. Howe, County Cllr. V. Lucas and 15 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence: None received.

2. To receive declarations of interest: None received.

3. Public participation: Issues raised included: using volunteers to carry out work in the parish, the possibility of Parish Councils joining together to buy in services such as grass cutting, low water pressure problems and ownership of a ditch.

4. Co-option to fill councillor vacancy.

Notices advertising the councillor vacancy created by the resignation of Mr. Paine were placed on the notice boards on 4th July 2011. The Clerk had received one application before the meeting, from Mr. R. Howe. Cllr. Sisman proposed that Robin Howe be co-opted on to the Parish Council. Seconded by Cllr. Bryce. 5 further votes in favour. 1 against. Mr. Howe was duly welcomed onto the Parish Council and signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which was witnessed by the Clerk. The Clerk handed Cllr. Howe a Registration of Financial and Other Interests Form to be completed and sent to the Monitoring Officer at HDC.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2011:

Cllr. Bryce proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Seconded by Cllr. Perkins. 6 further votes in favour. Cllr. Brown stated that he did not receive a copy of the minutes and therefore abstained from the vote.

6. Matters arising from the minutes:

a. Update by the Clerk on two Code of Conduct complaints made by parishioners to the Monitoring Officer at HDC concerning ex – Cllr. David Paine.

Case No. 45 – Case now closed by HDC.

Case No. 44 – Complaint received alleging that Cllr. Paine had used Parish Council resources without authority, in disregard of the procedures for the regulation of Parish Council expenditure and conferred advantage upon the Parish Clerk by agreeing an advance of salary. This complaint was referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation. The case remains open and an investigating officer has been appointed.

b. Standing water on the highway in Great Raveley.

Cllr. Howe explained that this problem was being caused by a septic tank which is leaking through the soil into a ditch and then overflowing on to the highway. HDC are still dealing with the problem.

b. Maintenance of the closed churchyard at St. Peters Church.

Cllr. Paxton and Cllr. Shelford met with members of the PCC on 5th August. The Clerk had received a copy of notes made by Steve Douglas and had been advised that

the PCC would like the Parish Council to include cutting the grass in the churchyard in with the existing village grass cutting contract, starting from Spring 2012. Clerk to re-confirm this as Mr. Slinn appeared to be unaware of this request. The group had also discussed the need for some of the trees in the churchyard to be pruned. On 11th August, the Clerk, Cllr. Paxton, Cllr. Brown and Mr. Slinn met with Brian Ogden (Tree Officer HDC) so that he could give some expert advice and indicate the work that he would like to see done. All tree work in the conservation area will require prior permission from HDC and the Clerk is in the process of completing the necessary forms.

Mr. Slinn and Cllr. Brown would like to attend to some of the smaller pruning jobs and quotes are being obtained for the larger works. As this is on church property, any work carried out by volunteers must be with the permission of the church and the church must arrange suitable insurance cover. Work paid for by the Parish Council will be done by contractors who have the required insurance. The PCC must also apply for a faculty before any work is carried out and the Clerk had requested that no work is carried out until permission is granted by HDC. **DB**

d. Freedom of Information request.

The Clerk reported that she had now found the minutes from 1996 to 2004 and that these had been collated and deposited at the Archive Office within Huntingdon Library on 23rd August, Accession No. 5466. The member of the public who had requested to see the minutes from 1996 to 2007 had been updated and the Clerk continues to search for the minutes from 2004 to 2007. **DB**

e. Glebe Paddock.

Cllr. Sisman had inspected the gate at the entrance on the main road and concluded that it did not require changing at the present time. The gate has been fitted with a combination lock, handed to the Clerk by Mr. Paine when he resigned. The grass cutting contractor had been made aware of the combination. The Clerk had asked Cllr. Brown to remove the hand written sign which he had attached to a tree as there was already a sign on the gate. Councillors agreed that they would like a permanent “playing field” sign at the other entrance. Clerk to obtain prices. **DB**

The Clerk advised that she had followed up her request to Joliffe Daking to get the fence between the Nursing Home and Glebe paddock replaced but had yet to receive a reply. **DB**

7. To discuss Parish Councillor’s responsibilities and aims and to agree expenditure for Parish Councillor training sessions.

The Clerk handed copies of The Good Councillor’s Guide to councillors and advised that CPALC ran training courses consisting of 3 sessions which covered all aspects of Parish Council procedures and responsibilities. The cost of attending the sessions at CPALC’s offices would be £105 per councillor. Alternatively, sessions can be held in the Village Hall at a cost of 3 x £350 per session. The cost could be shared if councillors from other Parishes wished to attend and the Clerk had asked CPALC to find out whether any other Parish Councils would like to do this. It was agreed that all councillors would benefit from the training and Cllr. Brown proposed that the Clerk be authorised to spend up to £945 to arrange full training for 9 councillors. Seconded by Cllr. Howe, unanimously agreed. **DB**

8. Bentley Close play Area.

Concerns had been raised over a mini allotment which had been constructed on the opposite side of the path to the play equipment. The Clerk advised that the land does

not form part of the Parish Council's property and showed councillors a copy of the deeds which indicate that the play area is confined to the area on the other side of the path. There is a letter in the Parish Council files from the lady who gardens the mini allotment stating that she has the permission of the land owner.

The Clerk advised that safety inspections of both play areas had been carried out by Wicksteed Leisure and that a written report would be received in due course. The cost of the 2 inspections would be £90.

9. Cemetery.

a. Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial for Mr Geoffrey Cobb.

The Clerk advised that Mr. Geoffrey Cobb, who had died on 20th July 2011, had been buried in the cemetery on 28th July 2011 in Row 17 No. 16

A cheque for £187.50 - £125.00 (purchase of grave space), and £62.50 (interment fee) had been received and banked.

b. Arrangements for dealing with cemetery matters whilst the Clerk is away.

The Clerk advised that she had given copies of the cemetery map which showed all occupied, reserved and available spaces, to Cllr. Paxton, Cllr. Sisman and Swearers so that funeral arrangements could be made should the Clerk be unavailable.

c. To consider a quote for repairs to the copping stones on the dwarf wall.

Cllr. Rignall proposed that the quote of £45 from Mr. A. Davis be accepted. Seconded by Cllr. Perkins, unanimously agreed.

d. Maintenance of the cemetery hedges.

The Clerk advised that she had become aware that Cllr. Brown had started to cut the hedge to the left of the new cemetery gates, having received a complaint from a parishioner. The Clerk had contacted Cllr. Brown and asked him to stop work as he did not have the permission of the Parish Council and therefore had no personal insurance or public liability insurance. The Clerk had inspected the work and although she did not agree that the work was as described by the parishioner, felt that Cllr. Brown did not have the necessary equipment in order to complete the work in a time frame that would be desirable for an area accessed by the public or to the standard that would be required. Whilst at the cemetery, the Clerk had discovered that Cllr. Brown had also pruned the lower branches of a Chestnut Tree, work which requires permission being in the conservation area, and had left a pile of debris which could be a trip hazard to visitors.

In order to remedy the situation, the Clerk had obtained 2 quotations from Mr. A. Davis and Mr. L. Stokes and had gained approval from 6 Parish Councillors to ask Mr. Davis to carry out the work for the sum of £95.00. Cllr. Bryce proposed retrospective approval of the action taken by the Clerk. Seconded by Cllr. Perkins, unanimously agreed. The Clerk had also obtained 2 separate sets of quotations: To cut the right hand hedge (£125 Mr. A. Davis, £140 Mr. L. Stokes) or to reduce it by 3 – 4 feet to the same height as the left hand hedge (£275 Mr. A. Davis or £290 Mr. L. Stokes). Councillors decided that they would like to reduce the height by 2 feet in order to make it more manageable going forward but did not wish the two hedges to be the same height. Cllr. Perkins proposed that the Clerk be authorised to negotiate a price with Mr. A. Davis with expenditure up to £220. Seconded by Cllr. Shelford, unanimously agreed. **DB**

The Clerk stated that she did not wish to discourage volunteers from carrying out work in the village but stressed that permission must be sought from the land owner first, to enable the Clerk to make sure that they have the necessary personal and public liability insurance cover and safety equipment in order to carry the work out safely.

Cllr. Brown apologised to the Clerk and Councillors for his actions.

10. Planning.

a. To consider and agree the Parish Council's recommendation for the following planning application:

1001782FUL, Change of use of existing buildings from agriculture to B1 (office), Common Farm, Chapel Road, Ramsey Heights, Huntingdon, PE26 2RS.

Cllr. Brown proposed that the Parish Council recommend refusal. Seconded by Cllr. Howe, unanimously agreed. It was noted that the Clerk had received 6 letters of objection to the planning application.

1101352FUL, Proposed conversion of loft to create bedroom and ensuite, 35 High Street, Upwood, Huntingdon, PE26 2QE.

Cllr. Howe proposed that the Parish Council recommend approval. Seconded by Cllr. Brown, unanimously agreed.

1101394CLED, Certificate of lawfulness for use of land to the rear of 15 Church Lane, Upwood, PE26 2QF

Cllr. Brown proposed that the Parish Council recommend approval. Seconded by Cllr. Bryce, unanimously agreed.

b. Update on previously discussed applications:

1100943TREE Felling and removal of one Yew tree. Upwood Manor, High Street, Upwood. Consent given by HDC.

1100515FUL, Proposed conversion of loft to create bedroom and ensuite. 35 High Street, Upwood, PE26 2QE. Refused by HDC.

1100691FUL, Extension to provide disable access bathroom and opening to connect to downstairs bedroom. 7, Farm Close, Upwood, PE26 2QB. Permission granted by HDC.

1100660FUL, Erection of 6 bay modular building for use as Pre-school and Out-of-hours school club. Upwood Primary School. Pending decision by HDC.

1100765S73, Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 0901675FUL for erection of agricultural storage building, to read: - roof of the building shall be finished in Goosewing Grey colour or with PV cells to the southern aspect. Colwyn, Upwood Road, Ramsey Heights. Permission granted by HDC.

11. Financial report.

a. Payment of outstanding debts;

Cllr. Rignall proposed approval of payment of items (1) to (7). Seconded by Cllr. Shelford, unanimously agreed.

(1) HDC - £135.00 – Electoral services. Cq. No. 101228

(2) CCC - £669.60 – Purchase of 6 salt bins. Cq. No. 101229

(3) Mr. A. Davis - £995.00 – Village grass cutting on 14/7, 27/7 & 19/8, repairs to village sign and hedge cut. Cq. No. 101230

(4) Mr. B. C. Edwards - £61.68 – Wages of Cemetery Maintenance Officer 1/7/11 to 30/9/11. Cq. No. 101231

(5) Inland Revenue - £15.41 – PAYE. Cq. No. 101232

(6) Mrs. D. Benham - £701.98 – Services of Acting Parish Clerk 1/7/11 to 31/8/11 and expenses. Cq. No. 101233

(7) Mrs. D. Benham - £400.00 – 20 hours work on financial investigations as agreed. Cq. No. 101234

b. Current position.

The Clerk handed copies of the receipts and payments to each councillor. A copy to be annexed to the minute book.

12. Correspondence.

a. Letter from a parishioner regarding overgrown trees and shrubs around the village. The Clerk had replied highlighting that the Parish Council is only responsible for those on land that it owns or rents and also giving the contact telephone number for Highways at CCC.

b. Letter from HDC regarding two documents – 1. Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule & 2. Draft Developer Contributions Supplementary planning Document. Details of the website to be circulated.

c. Aspects of Localism – Copy of slides used at NALC presentation about the Localism Bill to be circulated.

d. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Beacons – information on how to join in the project to light 2012 beacons as part of the celebrations next year, to be circulated.

e. Posters advertising HDC's new website passed to Cllr. Sisman for the notice boards. **KS**

f. Posters advertising the AGM of Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust on 29th September passed to Cllr. Sisman for the notice boards. **KS**

g. Letter from Highways asking for confirmation of the location of salt bins passed to Cllr. Sisman to complete. **KS**

h. Request received from a member of the public under the Data Protection Act, asking for copies of all information held about them. The Clerk advised that she had contacted CPALC for advice. They in turn will consult with the Legal Department of NALC and it could take up to 6 weeks to get a response. The Clerk had advised the member of the public accordingly. **DB**

i. Further Freedom of Information request from a member of the public for various information. To be dealt with by the Clerk. **DB**

13. Reports from councillors.

County Cllr. Lucas emphasized the need for all volunteers to work through the Parish Council as the Localism Bill was still in the process of going through parliament. Once through, advice would be available from CCC.

County Cllr. Lucas advised that Natural England had received funding for volunteers and that Ordinance Survey information was now available for free.

District Cllr. Howe advised that Urban & Civic, the owners of Alconbury Airfield, would be holding an Open Day at the Airfield on Saturday 24th September 1pm to 5pm, for residents of local villages to view their plans for the site and to register their views.

Cllr. Sisman stressed the need for volunteers to be properly equipped with safety equipment and also requested that Freedom of Information requests be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. **DB**

Cllr. Brown advised that the goal posts in Glebe Paddock needed painting and that there was an overhanging bough which needed inspecting. Cllr. Brown advised that the National Grid shed near Charters Spinney needed to be refurbished. Clerk to investigate. Clerk to contact HDC regarding an overgrown hedge on the corner of Longholme and The High Street **DB**

14. Recruitment of a permanent Parish Clerk.

Cllr. Paxton and Cllr. Bryce had yet to prepare an advert to recruit a permanent experienced Parish Clerk. The Clerk advised that this matter was now urgent as her agreement to be Acting Clerk would end on 27th October. The Clerk agreed to provide assistance with the advert. **JP/CB/DB**

15. Date of the next meeting: Monday 3rd October 2011 starting at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

It was resolved in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business transacted at the next agenda item, the Chairman asked that in the public interest, the public and press were temporarily excluded from the meeting and were instructed to withdraw.

16a. To receive an update from the Acting Parish Clerk, Mrs. D. Benham, on the actions taken following the resignation of the previous Clerk, Jane Haggar. The Clerk gave an update on the actions taken. Details will remain confidential until the issues that were discussed are resolved.

b. To discuss and agree the Parish Council's response to two letters from the Upwood and The Raveleys Newsletter Committee.

Since the last meeting the Clerk had advised the Newsletter Committee that the Parish Council would be prepared to pay for the printing costs of the next edition by direct payment to the printer.

The Clerk had received a letter dated 18th August asking for a donation for 2012/13. Councillors agreed that this would be considered at the November meeting, when budget and precept would be agreed.

The Clerk had received another letter dated 22nd August asking to proceed with the Parish Council's agreement to pay for the costs of printing an edition of the newsletter and also asking whether the Parish Council would pay for the printing costs of a further 2 issues. Cllr. Paxton proposed that the Parish Council should fund the three issues as requested, by direct payments to the printer, providing that the total cost did not exceed £500. Seconded by Cllr. Sisman, unanimously agreed.

The Newsletter Committee's letter had also asked for clarification as to why the method of the donation had been changed. Clerk to respond. **DB**

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 11.35pm

Signed.....

Date.....