



HALE PARISH COUNCIL

OF THE HALTON BOROUGH IN
THE COUNTY OF CHESHIRE



**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING
OF HALE PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT HALE VILLAGE HALL
ON MONDAY 17th JUNE 2024 AT 8.00pm**

Present: Cllr Trevaskis, Cllr Williams, Cllr Roberts, Cllr McNamara, Cllr Wright,
Cllr Lewis

In attendance: The Clerk, and nine member of public were also present

- 1. Apologies** - An apology was received from Cllr Anderson. No apologies were received from Cllrs Cleary, Healey or Brown
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – No declarations of interest were registered
- 3. Public Participation** – The chair allowed members of the Public to address the meeting.

A local resident voiced her concerns about the Hale voluntary Gardeners group whose membership has reduced significantly due to members increasing age and injuries. She said that residents don't appreciate the amount of work required to service the green spaces which are tended to by the group and that she fears it will not be sustainable. It was noted that Halton Borough council don't have the resources to service the areas in question and the resident suggested that it might be a good use of precept money for the Parish Council to consider employing a part time gardener on an ad-hoc basis. It would be a good idea to advertise for a local resident who might have an interest going forward as the work is like "Painting the Forth Bridge". Additional help she believes would free up time to deal with the niceties and allow them not to have to focus as much on the labour intensive work.

A further resident from the members of public present asked whether this might be a task which the Friends of Hale Village (FOHV) could undertake but it was agreed that they appear to have their own agenda.

Cllr Trevaskis reminded the meeting that the Parish Council did employ a gardener for a few months before the Covid-19 lock down but that Hale Park Estates were insistent that they did not need any assistance at that time and would work with FOHV to undertake work around the Village.

The Chair used Woolton Village as an example of an area which can demonstrate a successful contribution from its residents and which looks beautiful during the summer months. Areas are well maintained and it is believed that they have a willing group who can undertake the work annually. The chair said he would visit the green spaces which are in need of maintenance to get a better idea about the requirements and report back to this Council in due course.

Recently a number of local residents received individual invitations from the Friends of Hale Village in partnership with Halton Borough Council to celebrate National Volunteers Day. A recognised regular local volunteer who has not received an invitation said that the process used for selecting worthy candidates was extremely flawed and that many local volunteers have been omitted due to personality clashes with the selectors and not on the basis of their contribution to the Village. It is believed that the selection process for invitations has created a lot of bad feeling and has failed to acknowledge some significant residents and their partners. Examples of local resident being upset by having been invited even though they themselves do not believe they are worthy of an invitation were heard and an email from a former Parish Councillor was discussed by the members.

- *A vote to address item Ten on the Agenda at this point due to its significance in this part of the meeting was taken and approved unanimously.*

10. Volunteer Week 2024

The Chair informed the meeting that he has arranged to meet the Chair of the FOHV to establish the details regarding the selection process used for inclusion of local residents on an invitation list to celebrate National Volunteers Day. In addition to establish what part Halton Borough Council have played and why Hale Parish council have not been asked for any contribution or inclusion.

Cllr Lewis who is a member of the FOHV gave an account of how she believes the candidates were selected for invitation to the event.

It was widely agreed that the selection process should have been handled a lot more sensitively with the individual local groups being asked to nominate worthy candidates as a priority.

Cllr Lewis was keen to inform the meeting that the Chair of FOHV is eager to meet and work with the Parish Council and that should be encouraged. However, Cllr Roberts expressed his disappointed that his invitation and that of his wife are not formal invitations to him as the Chairman of the Parish Council but rather to him as a resident of Hale. He feels that the whole process has been misguided and divisive and is a missed opportunity to promote village unity.

The Chair went on to say how delighted he was with the collective efforts of the Parish Council and local Volunteers who contributed to the recent D-Day event and Carnival festivities. It was felt that both events were well attended and worthwhile and his thanks to all the contributors was registered. He stated that there are already additional plans being considered for inclusive events in the Village Hall in the coming months which could be considered as fund raisers.

The Clerk said he had contacted Halton BC regarding the Carnival's siting in 2025 and will report back to this Council in due course

A resident stated that she had heard a few complaints regarding the cost of rides at the Carnival and it was felt that this should be discussed prior to next years event. In addition she felt there were not enough stalls and that perhaps they could be advertised more widely and in the Parish Council Newsletter.

It was recognised that some serious issues regarding the booking system for stalls need to be addressed to protect the stall holders from the “scamming” which was evident this year.

- 4. Minutes.** – The minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of 20th May 2024 were recorded as a true and accurate account pending the amendment to agenda item 17 regarding attendance of ward Councillors to Parish Council meetings.

Proposed by Cllr Wright and seconded by Cllr McNamara

The Motion was approved Unanimously

- 5. Accounts** – Cllr Roberts proposed that all payments and receipts for the period 15th May 2024 and 7th June 2024 are a true and accurate record. This was seconded by Cllr Lewis

The Motion was approved Unanimously

- 6. Internal Auditors Report** – The Internal Auditors report was received and reviewed by the members. It was noted that a large portion of the criticism from the auditor was as a result of the lack of proper preparation and consideration by the Finance Committee which was in place at the time. Decisions regarding the budget for 2023 – 2024 were taken against advice and a considered opinion of a number of members and the Clerk/Financial Officer. It was agreed by some members that the budget was not realistic or workable and that it did not take into consideration the guidance by JPAG in respect of levels of reserve required.

It was agreed that an action plan to address any outstanding issues from the auditors report should be formulated and addressed as soon as is practicable

- 7. Annual Governance Statement** – It was agreed that some minor amendments as a result of the annual internal audit for 2023 – 2024 should be reflected on the Annual Governance Statement to be sent to the External Auditor.

Proposed by Cllr Trevaskis and seconded by Cllr Wright

The Motion was approved unanimously

- 8. Annual Accounting Statement** – The Annual accounting Statement was approved without amendment

Proposed by Cllr Roberts and seconded by Cllr McNamara

The Motion was approved unanimously

9. Policies – The following Policies were renewed without amendment.

- ii. Data Protection Policy
- iii. Document Retention & Disposal Policy
- iv. Expenses Policy
- v. Information Security Policy
- vi. Model Publication Scheme Policy

Proposed by Cllr Roberts and seconded by Cllr Lewis

The Motion was approved unanimously

The following Policies were deferred for review by a working group possibly consisting of Cllrs Lewis, McNamara, Roberts & Trevaskis

- i. Combined Equality & Diversity Policy
- ii. Safeguarding Young & Vulnerable People Policy
- iii. Volunteer Policy

Proposed by Cllr Roberts and seconded by Cllr Lewis

The Motion was approved unanimously

11. Date of Next Meeting – 29th July 2024 8.00pm

It was resolved to move the proposed Ordinary meeting for July due to holiday commitments by members

Proposed by Cllr Roberts and seconded by Cllr Trevaskis

The Motion was approved unanimously

The Chair Closed the Meeting at 9.00pm