

Langley with Hardley Parish Council

Minutes No: 2023/2

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 6 June 2023 at 7.30pm in Langley with Hardley Village Hall

Parish Councillors (5) present	Nigel Sullivan (Chair), Michael Caston, Garry Moore, Stuart Adcock and Rob Baldwin.
County Councillor	None.
District Councillors	None.
Also in attendance	Emma Webster (Clerk).
Members of the public	Four.

1. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Valid apologies were received from John Wheeler and Tibby Bunn.

2. To receive any declarations of interest from Members & consider requests for dispensation.

Members are invited to declare Disclosable interests and other interests in items on the agenda as required by the Langley with Hardley Parish Council Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011.

None.

3. To consider any declarations of office that have not been received and decide whether to grant an extension or declare the seat vacant.

IT WAS RESOLVED To grant John Wheeler an extension to sign the declaration of office until the beginning of the next meeting (4 July).

4. To approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 16 May 2023.

IT WAS RESOLVED That the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and will be signed when the DRAFT watermark is removed. There was a question from a member of the public that item 9 should read 2023, which was addressed in the meeting.

IT WAS RESOLVED to ask the Clerk to replace the draft minutes going forward on the website with the final version once they have been agreed. The Clerk explained that the minutes of a meeting will always be draft until agreed at the next meeting, where any amends are agreed and minuted. Clerk to action.

5. Adjournment for Public Participation (15 minutes allowed for).

This provides an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions about and comment on items on the agenda before the Council make decisions.

A local landowner attended the meeting and raised three points;

1. The issue of contact he had received from the District Council Highways department who had taken action on a letter they had received which was purported to be from Langley with Hardley Parish Council. The District Council will not provide a copy of this letter and the Parish Council has confirmed that there was no letter on record (either paper or electronic) as being sent. The resident suggested that someone is using the Parish Council name fraudulently and to investigate the issue and consider what action can be taken.

2. The issue of water on the road at Langley Street on the turning into Poplar Farm (the exact location can be found using the location finder 'what 3 words' using the words: applied/stretcher/voters). There is persistent water here, despite the resident clearing the ditches and it appears to be the drains and gullies under the road which are blocked. The resident asked who has responsibility for clearing the drains and could they be encouraged to clear them please.

3. Persistent number of trespassers on land owned by Langley Abbey Estates Limited. The resident explained that he was pushing back on persistent trespassers on this land, using the legal framework available to him, and injunctions have been and continue to be issued. New signage has not helped in this regard because when users reach the end of Stone Lane the Public Right of Way ceases and they need to double back to the main road. Councillors agreed that the rights of the Landowner and that of users of the

path need to be balanced and the Council supported the resident's right as Landowner to protect his land from persistent trespassers. What was not clear from the discussion was whether the landowner and the Parish Council shared the same view on what public access there was across the land owned by Langley Estates. Once there was common agreement on this, the landowners right to defend his land against trespassers (including new signage showing maps, at the landowners expense) would not be a matter for the Parish Council to comment on.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED;

On point 1. To consider this in further detail at the next meeting. Clerk to request a copy of the letter from the District Council Highways department. Clerk to add to the agenda.

On point 2. Clerk to report the water to Highways and ask them to take action. Clerk to action.

On point 3. For the Parish Council at the direction of the Chairman and through the Clerk, to provide a map showing what the Parish Council believe to be public access to Land owned by Langley Abbey Estates Limited and ask the landowner to agree or disagree with this map, with a view to coming to a shared agreement. Once this agreement is reached for the matter of how the landowner lawfully protects his land from trespassers not to be of concern to the Parish Council.

Continuing the section for public participation; A resident asked to read a statement she had prepared relating to Langley Church. This statement was read and is attached to the minutes for information. The Chairman thanked the resident for the statement. **IT WAS RESOLVED** to note the statement and include a copy with the minutes of the meeting. Clerk to action.

6. To discuss Councillor training and costs and agree on a course of action.

Councillors discussed the paper circulated prior to the meeting and there was discussion around the costs and benefits. Councillors noted that the in person training was discounted for this year only and it would be a good opportunity for Councillors to be universally trained with the expectation that it would be refresher training for some and new for others; and an opportunity to meet outside of the formal meeting structure to help foster good working relations. **IT WAS RESOLVED** to ask the Clerk to get dates that the trainer from Norfolk Association of Local Councils (Norfolk ALC) could deliver in person training and to use Langley with Hardley Village Hall as the venue. Clerk to action.

7. To discuss joining the Norfolk ALC.gov.uk pilot scheme and agree on a course of action.

Cllr Moore referred to the background paper and the offer of Norfolk ALC to provide a .gov.uk domain name, e-mail accounts and a website. There was discussion that having such a service would be beneficial for the reasons outlined in the paper, notably security, but there was a lack of clarity over how much support would be provided. Cllr Moore agreed to go back to Norfolk ALC with further questions. **IT WAS RESOLVED** To put this item back on the agenda for 4 July. Clerk to action.

8. To discuss the draft reserves statement and agree on a course of action.

The Clerk introduced the draft general reserves policy by saying that the recent Internal Audit Report had highlighted the Council did not have this policy, so a draft was prepared and circulated prior to the meeting using a standard template. It is generally recommended that between 3 and 12 months of predicted expenditure is held in General Reserves. With this in mind, the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer for the Parish, suggested the General Reserves figure be set at £6,000, roughly equal to 6 months expenditure. This was then discussed by Councillors which led to a wider discussion on what do local people want the Parish Council to do and how can this be funded. There was a split between Councillors who would be willing to put the precept up to pay for projects suggested by the community and those that felt it was important not to increase the precept to help the community in this cost of living crisis. It was agreed that this divide in opinion will need to be addressed prior to a decision being made later in the year about the setting of the precept. A member of the public present contributed by saying 'by all means put the precept up a little at a time (not suddenly all at once) but make sure it is spent and spent on what people want'. The rise in the cost of living (goods and services) was a deciding factor in Council deciding to set the General Reserves at 7k. **IT WAS RESOLVED** to set the General Reserves at 7K. Clerk to action.

9. To discuss the purchase of a replacement reference books and agree on a course of action.

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Council purchase both the Arnold Baker legal reference book (13th edition) to replace the previous (missing) copy and also the Clerk's Manual 2023 edition to replace the 2000 edition.

Both books will remain the property of Langley with Hardley Parish Council and not any one individual. Clerk to action.

10. To receive and note an outline paper on the provision of banking by Unity Bank. This is for information only.

Councillors discussed the paper and noted the contents. The Clerk asked Councillors to look at the service in more detail over the next month, highlighting that it was a banking facility designed for, and meet the needs of, Parish Councils. It was noted that there was a monthly fee, unlike the current provider. **IT WAS RESOLVED** to bring the item forward to the next meeting for a decision to be made on moving the Parish banking to Unity. Clerk to action.

11. To agree the payment of invoices and other expenditure.

Cheques were written for the following **expenses** during the meeting.

Cheque	To/For	Amount £
101065	Clerk salary and expenses	339.07
101064	Clerk grant from the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) towards the personal costs of the Certificate in Local Council Administration qualification (CiLCA)	200.00
101063	Catherine Moore, Internal Audit	75.00

The following **income** was noted;

From	Amount £
Grant from SLCC payable to the Clerk towards CiLCA qualification	200.00

12. To consider and note the Internal Audit report

The report was noted. Councillors queried the date on the report which is incorrect – Clerk to ask the Internal Auditor to change.

13. To consider matters arising from the Internal Audit report and agree on a course of action.

The Chairman took each item in turn;

Update the Internal Control Policy and prepare a Statement of Internal Control.	Clerk to action.
Update contact details for the Information Commissioners Officers.	Clerk to action.
Submit VAT claims within 3 year period.	Clerk to action.
Set a General Reserves Policy.	Clerk to action (see item 8).
Remedy outstanding payments to HMRC from previous clerk's employment	Clerk to action (see below).
The May 2022 agenda should have election of chairman as the first item.	Noted – this was from the period when LwH did not employ a Clerk.
The May agenda was not published on the Council's website.	Noted – this was from the period when LwH did not employ a Clerk.

In the background paper for this item; Prior to appointing a payroll/accountancy specialist to resolve the outstanding payments to HMRC the clerk offered to take on up to 6 extra hours at usual hourly rate to resolve the issue. **IT WAS RESOLVED THAT** Council authorises up to 6 hours overtime for the Clerk for this purpose. Clerk to action.

IT WAS RESOLVED to ask the clerk to action the items noted in the table above.

14. To discuss appointing Norfolk ALC (Association of Local Councils) as payroll provider and agree on a course of action.

The Clerk referred to the background report, and explained that having an external payroll provider would lower the risk of issues such as fines from outstanding payments to HMRC in the future. **IT WAS RESOLVED** to appoint Norfolk ALC as payroll provider. Clerk to action.

15. To consider and approve the Certificate of Exemption (Annual Governance Statement 2022/23) Part 2.

This was agreed by Council and signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

16. To consider and approve Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement 2022/23) of the Annual Return.

This was agreed by Council and signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

17. To consider and approve Section 2 (Annual Governance Statement 2022/23) of the Annual Return.

This was agreed by Council and signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

The clerk was thanked for providing all the cash book and accounts information in good time to allow Councillors to make an informed decision on signing off these documents.

18. To receive any items for inclusion on the next Parish Council meeting agenda.

The Clerk listed the following items;

Size of the no parking sign at Fish's Lane, the Parish Action Plan, Fish's Lane, Footpaths, No Mow May, Unity Bank, Chet Neighbourhood Plan.

19. To confirm date of the next Parish Council Meeting as Tuesday 4 July 2023 in Langley with Hardley Village Hall at 7.30 pm.

Confirmed.

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.