

Langley with Hardley Parish Council

Minutes No: 2023/4

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5 September 2023 at 7.30pm in Langley with Hardley Village Hall

Parish Councillors (6) present	Nigel Sullivan (Chair), Tibby Bunn, Garry Moore, Stuart Adcock, John Wheeler and Rob Baldwin.
County Councillor	None.
District Councillors	None.
Also in attendance	Emma Webster (Clerk).
Members of the public	Five.

1. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Valid apologies were received from Cllr Michael Caston.

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.

Cllr Baldwin declared an interest in item 24.

3. To approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4 July 2023.

Agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and will be published on-line with the DRAFT watermark removed. **Clerk to action.**

4. 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.

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting and asked that any contributions be raised within this adjournment period or saved until the end of the meeting to follow the regulations as set out in the Agenda.

Questions and responses were noted as;

Will No Mow May continue at all in the next growing season? The answer was no, it would not.

Will a show of hands be used to indicate agreement or otherwise to each item on the agenda? The Chair replied that he would ask for a show of hands 'if necessary', and it became apparent that there was not a general consensus.

Is the rear and the side of the village hall grass cutting included in the tender and paid for by the Parish Council? Yes.

Will a plaque be purchased for the tree planted to commemorate the ascension to the throne by the King? Yes.

The member of the public who offered to purchase materials for the refurbishment of the telephone box community library said that he had not received any further correspondence from the Council. The Chair replied that a parishioner had volunteered to complete the work over the Summer for the cost of materials used. The Chairman stated that he had receipts for the paint and brushes purchased by the volunteer and these would be in the region of £100. The member of the public who had originally offered to provide materials kindly agreed to pay for materials used.

5. To discuss the meeting frequency of Langley with Hardley Parish Council going forward and agree on a course of action.

There was general discussion with points raised about the time it takes to get work done in the Parish and how increasing the frequency (and therefore opportunities for items to be agreed by Council) could expedite work taking place. The Chairman said that the frequency of the meetings should be set at whatever is considered necessary to meet the needs of Council. There was general agreement that meeting 11 times a year would be favourable but would need to be balanced with the amount of Clerk time the Council had the budget to fund. The present Clerk said that she would not be willing to servicing monthly meetings if the current weekly hours (5) were not increased. Councillors agreed that extra meetings would require additional clerk time, both to prepare for, attend, minute and follow-up actions. The Chairman asked for an indication of cost and for this item to be brought back to the next meeting. Cllr Moore agreed to work up costings for consideration by Members.

6. To consider a request to move the January 2024 meeting from 2 to 9 January. Agree on a course of action.

The Chairman proposed that the January meeting is pushed back by a week, in order to avoid the end of the Christmas holidays and papers requiring publication during Christmas week. This was agreed. Clerk to publish the change on the Parish noticeboards and website.

7. To discuss the latest update on the Parish Council's access to HMRC on-line account and to discuss a penalty notice issued by the HMRC and agree a course of action.

The Chairman said that there are two strands to this item;

A. The possible unpaid HMRC contributions from the previous Clerk's employment as highlighted by the Internal Auditor. The Chairman asked the Clerk to address the Council on this issue. To further investigate this the Clerk explained that she needs access to the Employer's HMRC account. One re-set attempt was unsuccessful (the link is valid for 24 hrs only) and a second password re-set has been requested, which will go to the Chairman. The Clerk urged the Parish Council to ensure that in future the HMRC account is passed in a timely manner from one Clerk to the next and a good way of ensuring this is for the Clerk to use a Council postal address/Council mobile phone/Council e-mail rather than personal accounts or equipment. The Clerk also reported that the address for the Langley with Hardley HMRC Employer account has been changed from the previous Clerk's home address to the Village Hall address at some point during the last 8-12 weeks. This could only have been done by someone with access to the HMRC Employer's account.

B. As Members were made aware by e-mail Langley with Hardley Parish Council has received an invoice for 'Late filing penalty', c£415.00 (exact figure unknown as unable to log-into HMRC Employer account, see above). An appeal has been sent but no response received. The Chairman suggested that at the meeting Council authorises payment of up to £415 to HMRC to settle the invoice and then asks the Clerk to submit a second appeal (which will also require access to the Employers account). The mistake came about from the current Clerk's lack of training and knowledge of the HMRC system and the failure of the Council to ensure that the Employer's HMRC account details were handed over on her appointment to the role. The Clerk submitted a claim each time she was paid, but did not realise a nil claim has to be submitted on the months where no pay was received. The Clerk confirmed that payroll services are now provided by Norfolk ALC and this should ensure all payroll duties are fully discharged, including the provision of monthly payslips. Council asked the Clerk to challenge the fine, with help from Norfolk ALC, when access to the Employer account was received. Clerk to action.

8. To discuss the offer of a local resident to paint the kerb around Langley War Memorial. Agree on a course of action.

The Chairman thanked the member of the public (who was present at the meeting) for the generous offer of painting (in white) the kerb surrounding the Langley War Memorial at no cost to the Council. Cllr Wheeler said that he would check that the District Council Highways department would have no objection and then the member of the public would be given the go-ahead to proceed. The Chairman made clear that the War Memorial itself should not be painted in any way, just the kerb.

9. To discuss the setting up of a Council What's App group and agree on a course of action.

Cllr Baldwin led this discussion, outlining that a What's App messaging group would improve communication amongst Councillors and be faster and more responsive than e-mail. For the idea to work Cllr Baldwin said that it would need to be all inclusive. After some discussion and general agreement to the idea not all Councillors had a device compatible with the WhatsApp application so the idea will not be taken forward at this time.

10. To discuss the grass cutting scope, monitoring of the work and prepare for the next tender process. Agree on a course of action.

Cllr Baldwin asked if the Council had a copy of the contract that the current providers of grass cutting services to the Council signed when they started the work. The Chairman confirmed that the contract is due to run until the end of the growing season 2024. The Clerk said that the contract was signed during a period when the Parish was without a Clerk and despite a search of electronic and paper files a signed contract could not be located. The Chairman said that the Council was satisfied with the work undertaken, however Cllr Adcock said that the new bench in the play area had not been lifted for the grass to be cut and had grown up long at the sides as a result; the goal netting had been unpegged to cut and not re-pegged afterwards and that the grass around the balance trail was long in places and strimming could have been more efficient, so he was not satisfied that a good job was being done. Further to a comment in the public participation session there was a question whether the Parish Council should be paying for the grass to the back and side of the Village Hall to be cut and that this should be noted to be reviewed next time the tender is issued. Cllr Bunn said that the Village Hall Organising Committee arrange for the grass to be trimmed in this area between cuts. Cllr Baldwin said that without a signed contract stating what was and was not included it was difficult to challenge the contractors and asked the Clerk to ask the contractors if they could send a copy of their signed contract to the Council. **Clerk to action.**

11. To discuss issues arising from the RoSPA Play Area Inspection June 2023 and the weekly/monthly safety inspections. Agree on a course of action.

Cllr Adcock and Cllr Baldwin said that they would replace the 4 bolt caps on the 'rocker'. Cllr Wheeler said that the zip wire cable had been fully dismantled and checked during the last annual inspection. Cllr Wheeler asked the Clerk if the sign had been ordered for the play area and the Clerk said that it hadn't, but now the banking had been moved to Unity funds could be transferred on-line and the sign would be purchased before the next meeting. Cllr Baldwin and Cllr Adcock now have the Parish key to the play area and have agreed to go in with a portable pressure washer and clean off the bird droppings from the equipment, and were thanked by the Chairman for this. Cllr Bunn stepped down from completing the weekly playground checks and Cllr Baldwin, who had done the checks over the Summer, took over the role.

There then followed a more general discussion about ownership of issues on the Parish Action plan and how this document could be used to drive things forward, especially if names and dates were added, however Councillors agreed that there was not enough time in Council meetings to do this. An extraordinary meeting was suggested, however the Clerk suggested a more informal working group could convene and look at the Action Plan and bring a fully worked up idea for discussion and agreement on next steps to the November Council meeting. All Councillors said that they would welcome this idea. It was suggested and then agreed that the out-of-date Council policies and procedures documents on the website could also be given some attention in the working group and presented for adoption at the next Council meeting. It was agreed that a date in the next two weeks would be sought by e-mail.

12. To discuss the Langley with Hardley Parish Trust, registered with the Charity Commission, and receive an update from the Chairman from Community Action Norfolk in this regard. Agree on a course of action.

The Chairman talked about Poors Allotment, charity number 213109, and said that a local benefactor would be using this charity to distribute funds for the relief of need amongst Langley and Hardley residents. The Chairman had attended two meetings relating to the distribution of these funds and understood that there would be representatives from each local area who would identify those in need. The Chairman had put Tibby Bunn's name down as the representative for Langley and Hardley. The Chairman went on to say that the availability of funding would be advertised in CHET Contact magazine and that the benefactor wished to remain anonymous. Cllr Adcock asked the Chairman to clarify that charity number 213109 had the ability to offer grants to residents of both Langley and Hardley, the Chairman didn't know but agreed to find out.

There was no update given by the Chairman relating to the administration of Langley with Hardley Parish Trust, registered charity 1117975. At the request of the Chairman, Community Action Norfolk are looking into the status of this charity which relates to the to 'the allotment of Former Surveyors of Highways for the Repair of Highways and Roads', land which the Parish Council licensed to Mr D Tabor for 5 years from 8 January 2001, and the Chairman will report back when Community Action Norfolk are able to provide an update.

13. To discuss dates for Councillor in-person training. Agree on a course of action.

It was agreed to engage the services of Norfolk ALC to deliver training from 6.30pm – 9pm on Thursday 26 October at Langley with Hardley Village Hall if it is available. Clerk to action.

14. To discuss the provision of a council funded litter bin at Hardley Staithe. Agree on a course of action.

Cllr Moore was able to give a verbal report, as requested at the last meeting. Cllr Moore said that on a number of occasions when he has visited the Staithe the dog waste bin has been used for it's intended purpose and he hadn't seen a repeat of the overflowing rubbish dumped in the dog waste bin that was photographed and sent to the Parish Council after the late May bank holiday. There was discussion about who might be creating the waste, boat owners or walkers but general overall agreement that the May incident was a one-off. The Chairman summed up the conversation by saying it no longer appeared to be a problem and the provision of a waste bin could be looked at again if the need arose.

15. To discuss the progress on the refurbishment of the telephone box community library. Agree on a course of action.

The Chairman reported that he had agreed with a local resident that he could purchase materials and re-paint the telephone box over the Summer, and encouraged people to go and take a look. He considered a good job had been done and asked the Clerk to write a letter of thanks. Cllr Baldwin said that this goes against what was agreed at the last meeting and that the decision for the local resident to buy his own materials should have come back to Council. The Chairman said that he was keen for the work to be done in the Summer months. See also note in public participation session on this topic.

16. To discuss the purchase of three commemorative poppy wreaths from the Royal British Legion.

The Council agreed to purchase three poppy wreaths; one each for the churches at Langley and Hardley and one for the Langley War memorial at a cost of £20 per wreath. This was agreed, Clerk to action.

17. To discuss the renewal of the Parish Council's subscription to Community Action Norfolk (CAN). Agree on a course of action.

There was some discussion regarding what the Council actually receives in return for this subscription. It was proposed that the renewal was at bronze level, same as last year, at a cost of £20. The Chairman explained that CAN are, amongst other things, specialists in dealing with charity law and are currently working on looking into the Council's obligations for the Langley with Hardley Parish Trust. It was agreed to renew the subscription. Clerk to action.

18. To review the Parish Council's complaints policy. Agree on a course of action.

It was agreed that this policy would be reviewed as part of the working party (see item 11) and a worked up proposal brought back to Council for agreement or otherwise at the November meeting.

19. To review the Parish Council's equality and diversity policy. Agree on a course of action.

It was agreed that this policy would be reviewed as part of the working party (see item 11) and a worked up proposal brought back to Council for agreement or otherwise at the November meeting.

20. To discuss shared electronic filing between Clerk and Councillors. Agree on a course of action.

Cllr Baldwin raised this issue, with a view to making information more easily accessible, in one place. The Clerk and Cllr Moore had trialled a way of sharing key documents (like the Parish Action Plan) using the

freely available software 'Google docs' which seemed to work quite well. Clerk agreed to send out key documents that are not e-mailed this way in future. Clerk to action.

21. To note progress against the Parish Action Plan, and discuss issues arising. Agree on a course of action.

It was agreed that this plan would be reviewed as part of the working party (see item 11) and a worked up proposal brought back to Council for agreement or otherwise at the November meeting.

22. To discuss the Big Litter Pick and agree on a course of action.

The Chairman reported that the available funding from the District Council has now come to an end and that this should be discussed again in the Spring. Clerk to put on the forward agenda.

23. Reports from;

a. Parish Clerk

The Clerk reported that the Parish Banking has now been moved to Unity Bank. There are three signatories, Cllr Sullivan, Cllr Moore and herself and any two of these signatories are needed to authorise a transaction. A letter had been received from Barclays to say that the savings accounts would be closed, however this has not happened yet and there will be a small amount of interest to be added to the Unity bank account when this closure is complete.

The Clerk highlighted an e-mail from Bruno Peek regarding beacons to commemorate D- Day which will be forwarded to all Councillors by e-mail.

b. County and District Councillor, Kay Mason-Billig

None received.

c. District Councillor, Jeremy Rowe

Circulated by e-mail.

d. Police

None received.

e. Tree Warden

Cllr Wheeler reported that he is still looking for someone to pass on the role of Tree Warden. Cllr Adcock asked what was involved. Cllr Wheeler said that it had been a good year for trees. The plaque for the tree to commemorate the death of Queen Elizabeth II has now been placed by the tree in the playground and was considered to be of good quality. The Clerk was asked to purchase a similar stake to be placed underneath the tree planted to commemorate the Kings ascension to the throne. Clerk to action. The Chairman thanked Cllr Wheeler for continuing in the role of Tree Warden.

24. Planning:

To receive new planning applications and make comment, To receive results and updates on outstanding applications.

Application received BA/2023/0309/FUL: To change the use of two agricultural barns into Holiday lets.

Parish Council response sent: Approval subject to conditions.

There were no outstanding applications to receive updates on.

25. Highways:

To receive a report on outstanding highways issues.

Cllr Wheeler oversees all the highways issues on behalf of the Parish Council. Cllr Wheeler thanked the landowner who had cut a pathway through the area known as the Gallops promptly after the last meeting.

26. Finance

a. To consider any grant applications received in accordance with Langley with Hardley Parish Council Grant Awarding Policy. None.

b. To receive the income and expenditure figures;

These were not given during the meeting.

c. To agree the payment of invoices and other expenses. The following expenses were agreed to be paid using the new Unity Bank on-line system.

To/For	Amount £
Norfolk Association of Local Councils (payroll provision)	86.40
Clerk salary and expenses	672.50
Community Action Norfolk	20.00
South Norfolk Council (dog bin emptying)	300.60
Dean Baldry (grass cutting)	162.50
GS Tractor Services (grass cutting)	162.50
HMRC	415.00

d. To note any monies received. None.

27. To receive updates from individual Council Members (for information only)

Cllr Baldwin said that he had concerns about the start time of the duck shoot beginning as it did pre-dawn. Whilst all agreed that it was early it was also agreed that the Parish Council had no influence over the timing of the shoot.

Members of the public who had been asked to save their questions until the end of the meeting then asked;

Will the recently purchased Arnold Baker book and Clerk's Manual be included in the Council's asset register? The Clerk replied that it would.

A member of the public passed on their thanks to the Council for a job well done on the Fish's Lane trees which had been she considered to be well cut.

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

- Initial budget and precept discussion
- Report back from working group
- To discuss the meeting frequency (see item 5)

29. To confirm date of the next Parish Council Meeting as Tuesday 7 November 2023 in Langley with Hardley Village Hall at 7.30 pm.

Confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9.34pm