



# UPTON BY CHESTER AND DISTRICT PARISH COUNCIL

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**Minutes of the Upton by Chester and District Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 19 February 2024, 7.30pm, at Upton Pavilion, Wealstone Lane, Upton, Chester.**

**Present:** Cllr S Akhtar, Cllr J Ebo, Cllr H Jackson, Cllr C Jeffery, Cllr R Lee, Cllr A Lingard, Cllr H Morgan, Cllr S Stanley (Chair) and Cllr H Wilman.

In the absence of the Clerk, Cllr Wilman took the minutes.

## **188.24 OPEN FORUM.**

Three members of the public attended the meeting, and one member of the public spoke in support of his application for co-option at item 19.

**189.24 Apologies:** Apologies and reasons for absence were reported to the Chair by Cllr M Bryan and Cllr M Carter.

**Resolved: Noted**

## **190.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

None were declared

## **191.24 COMMUNITY SAFETY.**

The Upton Police team were unable to send a staff member to attend the meeting. The Upton Police Update had previously been circulated to Councillors.

**Resolved: The Police Report was received and noted.**

## **192.24 MINUTES**

**Resolved: The Chair signed the Minutes of the meetings held on Monday 15 January 2024.**

## **193.24 CLERK'S REPORT**

**Resolved: A report from the Clerk on action taken on the resolutions of the last meeting was received and the following was noted:**

**14. Risk Assessment – Councillors have continued to update the general Risk Assessment**  
**17. Amendment to Standing Orders - The Clerk was asked to update the website to show that the published Standing Orders were approved on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and amended on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024.**

#### **194.24 EMERGENCY AGENDA ITEM**

After taking advice from ChALC, the Council considered necessary actions in the absence of the Clerk

**Resolved: The Chair can issue and publicise meeting Agendas in the absence of the Clerk and in line with Standing Orders. Cllr Lingard will arrange for publication of agendas and minutes to meet statutory requirements.**

**From Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February, if the Clerk continues to be absent, then Cllr Wilman will assume the unpaid role of Acting Responsible Financial Officer, assisted by Cllr Lingard; and Cllr Lee will take on some unpaid duties of the Clerk particularly in relation to line management of staff and supporting the recruitment of bank staff.**

#### **195.24 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The previous meeting asked for a Health & Safety update using WorkNest records to minimise staff time spent on reporting to meetings.

**Resolved: Cllr Morgan will consult with the Facilities Manager on the best way of reporting.**

A written report from the Facilities Manager was taken at this point and the following actions noted.

**Resolved: The changing rooms will remain; the Asset Management Committee has asked the Facilities Manager to source quotes for an external storage container.**

**Fire Extinguisher and Fire Warden training will be undertaken by all staff, and funds are available for this.**

**The Facilities Manager will be asked to seek advice from WorkNest on requirements for Fire Marshals.**

**The Council would like the memorial tree at the War Memorial replaced with a suitable, native species. The Facilities Manager will work with Cllr Akhtar together with the Volunteer gardening group to source a tree, and maintenance budget is available for purchase if required.**

**A plan for training on bowling green care was referred to the Asset Management Committee.**

**The Council's Training Policy will be reviewed at the March meeting.**

#### **196.24 COMMITTEE MINUTES.**

Minutes of Committee meetings held since the last meeting were received and recommendations were approved:

- Community Engagement Committee 22.01.24

**Councillors were asked to set aside the following dates: Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 7 pm for the Annual Parish Assembly, and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September for the FunDay.**

**Members of the Community Engagement Committee have attended a demonstration of an online consultation platform from GoCollaborate, who work with other Parish Councils. Cllr Jackson is continuing to build relationships with Upton businesses and organisations and is compiling a contact list for people leading local organisations and local businesses who would like to be kept informed of Parish Council news.**

- Assets Management Committee 22.01.24
- Finance Committee 12.02.24

- Employment Committee 12.02.24

**Resolved:** The Council approved the Employee Handbook as provided by the Council's external HR advisors. This is subject to minor amendments to reflect the context of a Parish Council, and alignment with the Green Book.

**Resolved:** The Council will individually consult staff on the changes.

**Resolved:** The Council approved the Staff/Councillor Protocol which sets out guidelines for productive interaction between staff and councillors.

**Resolved:** The new Protocol will be communicated to all staff.

**Resolved:** The Council will begin the recruitment process for two bank staff, to be in place before the Easter weekend.

The Chair reported that the Strategic Plan Working Group met in January, and initially set out five 'starter ideas' for projects in the community. These have been circulated to all Councillors. The Chair will arrange a face-to-face meeting at 7pm on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March for all councillors to contribute to these ideas, before going to the community for consultation.

#### **197.24 FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS REPORTS.**

**Resolved:** The Payments and Receipts Report for January was received and noted. For ease of reading, a separate Payments Report and a separate Receipts Report will be presented in the future.

**Resolved:** The Budget Variance report for January, including an explanation of variances, was received, and noted.

**Resolved:** The statement of bank account balances at the end of January was received and noted. The Council expects a third bank account to be operational before the Precept is received in April, so that all Council deposits remain eligible for protection from the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

#### **198.24 BOROUGH COUNCILLORS' REPORT.**

Cllr Akhtar reported to the meeting on work that she has undertaken on behalf of residents, particularly around parking issues in Upton.

**Resolved:** The Council will consider Roads and Travel as a separate agenda item at a future meeting.

#### **199.24 CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence requiring a Council response had been circulated.

#### **200.24 VAT.**

The report from the Parkinson Partnership was received and noted. Further data is required from the Clerk to calculate our final VAT liability.

**Resolved:** The Council will instruct Parkinsons to support the Council's backdated VAT registration with HMRC from 1 September 2016.

#### **201.24 2022/23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND RETURN.**

The External Auditor's Final Report for 2022/23 was received and noted. It is available on the Council's website. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit has been published in

accordance with requirements and provides information on how members of the public can inspect the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

**Resolved: The final charge of £840 +VAT for the 2022/23 External Auditor will be paid. This was slightly outside the planned budget as the Council had fallen into the higher income fee bracket in 2022/23.**

**The Council will be appointing a new Internal Auditor for the 2023/24 financial year.**

**All Councillors were briefed on their responsibilities for completing and approving the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which the Council expects to approve in May 2024.**

#### **202.24 SHORT-TERM ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST.**

**Resolved: The specification was approved, subject to minor amendments from Cllr Lee.**

#### **203 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY.**

It was noted that this is an aspirational policy for the PC to work towards

**Resolved: The Community Engagement Policy was approved.**

#### **204.24 POLICIES.**

**Resolved: Cllr Lee and Cllr Lingard will review the list of required Council policies and make recommendations, as part of their work on the Council's General Risk Assessment.**

#### **205.24 NEW HIGHWAYS SIGNAGE.**

**Resolved: This item was deferred to a future meeting when Roads and Travel will be considered in more detail.**

#### **206.24 CO-OPTION.**

Three members of the public presented themselves for co-option to the Council.

**Resolved: Mr Ian Gibson and Mrs Yvonne Gibson were both co-opted to the Council.**

#### **207.24 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING.**

**Resolved: the date of the next meeting will be Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7.30pm.**

The meeting closed at 9pm