

HIGHMOOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 3 April 2024 at 7.00pm at the Memorial Hall, Highmoor

Present: Councillor Elaine Mulvaney (Chairman); Councillors Catherine Clarke, Sally Cray, Judi Stacpoole and Richard Stacpoole.

Also Present: Theresa Goss (Clerk, Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer) County Councillor David Bartholomew and three members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed those in attendance to the Annual Parish meeting noting, with disappointment, little public present.

1. **Apologies for absence** – District Councillor Jo Robb.
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 5 April 2023 and Matters Arising** - The minutes were approved and duly signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.
3. **Highmoor Parish Council - Annual Report 2023/24** - The Chairman of Highmoor Parish Council, Councillor Ms E M Mulvaney summarised the work of the Parish Council during the year from April 2023 to date.

Administration - Highmoor had an uncontested election in the most recent Parish Council elections which were held in May 2023 because there were five nominations for the five seats on the Parish Council.

Councillor Jane Stevens, who had served on the Parish Council for many years, sadly passed away in October 2023 after a long illness. Following this sad event, Sally Cray was co-opted onto the Parish Council in March 2024.

Bulb planting at the village triangle was organised by local residents and supported by the Parish Council took place on 17 December 2023 in memory of Councillor Stevens. We fondly remember Jane and all her work and her valuable contributions to the Parish.

Mrs Theresa Goss had served as the Parish Council's interim Clerk since October 2023 and had been appointed on a permanent basis from April 2024.

In April 2024, the Chairman was Ms Elaine Mulvaney and the Parish Council had a full complement of five councillors. The new Parish Councillors started their office on 10 May 2023 and would serve for a term of four years.

Full details of the clerk and all councillors were available on the Council's new website <https://highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Meetings - Parish Council meetings were currently held at Highmoor Memorial Hall and members of the public were welcome to attend and listen to the debates. Notices and details of Council and Parish meetings were posted on the parish noticeboard (located in the car park of the Memorial Hall) and also on the Council's website www.highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk

Work of the Parish Council - The Parish Council is the first local tier of government, beneath the county council and district council. We have an advisory role on local planning applications and maintain local amenities including the telephone box, the recreation ground and the paddock at The Glebe.

New Highmoor Parish Council gov.uk website - During the past year the new Highmoor Parish Council website had been created and was launched in January 2024.



The website can be found at <https://highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk/> and had much information regarding the Parish Council, its minutes, financial reports and planning applications etc.

We were grateful to Cllr Catherine Clarke for her work in establishing this. We encourage all to use it as a point of reference.

Accounts and finances - The Parish Council had set a Precept for the year 2024/25 of £13,963 which is intended to provide a realistic amount to cover expenses which the Parish Council is obliged by law to incur, such as the salary and expenses of a clerk to carry out all the necessary administration for the Parish Council, public and employment liability insurances, the maintenance of our website, the fees for our annual audit and a small amount to fund the maintenance of local amenities belonging to the Parish Council as well as allowing us to set aside a modest amount by way of reserves as recommended as best practice by government guidelines and our own annual audits. We would continue to seek to ensure value for money for the parish.

A successful audit was carried out for 2022/23 and improvements made in systems used. New policies and procedures had been adopted to assist with the Council's administration.

Green spaces and the environment - Over the past year, the Council had been able to fund tree maintenance and surgery at The Glebe, a survey of the trees at the recreation ground with a view also to carrying out any necessary maintenance work there, much needed hedge trimming at the recreation ground, and had also given a grant to support the Conservators of the Nettlebed and District Commons in their maintenance and grass cutting of the triangle/green in the centre of the village which was owned by the Conservators, rather than the Parish Council.

The annual village litter pick organised by the Council took place on 17 March 2024 and was well supported.

Planning, highways and speeding - The Council managed to keep a consistent workload moving, a large part of which was related to planning matters which included making observations on relevant local planning applications.

As well as working to protect the rural nature of Highmoor and its status within the Chiltern's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by way of planning observations, the Council continues to seek ways of reducing the high levels of speeding traffic along the B481 through the village.

Over the last year following the efforts of the Council to work with the Highways Department of Oxfordshire County Council and after consultation with Thames Valley Police, parishioners would have noticed much improved road signage, painted road markings refreshed throughout the village and the introduction of simple bollards and chevrons in locations particularly in need of demarcation, with a consequent reduction in speeding and reported traffic incidents.

The Parish Council continued its monitoring system of reports made through Fix My Street Oxfordshire and this in turn has led to action in many cases by the Oxfordshire County Council in repairs to potholes/damaged road surfaces and overhanging hedges etc.

The Future - The Councillors would welcome a closer working relationship with the community to hear electors' comments on all issues relevant to this beautiful rural area, giving a better understanding of how its residents see the future of the village and how best to ensure the retention of its character and peaceful environment.

The report would also be available on the Parish Council website.
www.highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk

4. **Discussion of Chairman's Report and questions from electors on the Highmoor Electoral roll, on the work of the Parish Council** – There were no questions from the electors.



5. **Parish Council Accounts 2023/2024** - The Clerk presented to the Annual Parish Meeting, the Accounts for 2023/2024. There were no questions on the accounts.

The accounts for 2023/2024 would be available on the Parish Council web site.
www.highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk

6. **Reports from County and District Councillors** – Prior to the meeting, County Councillor David Bartholomew and District Councillors Jo Robb and James Norman had submitted their reports to the Annual Parish Meeting.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bartholomew for attending Parish Council meetings throughout the year and for his support on a number of matters.

The County and District Councillors were thanked for their reports for 2023/2024 and they would be available on the Parish Council web site. www.highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk

7. **Village Organisations – Reports were received from the following local organisations:**

- i) Highmoor Education Charity – Presented by Councillor Judi Stacpoole.
- ii) Highmoor Memorial Hall – Presented by Councillor Richard Stacpoole.
- iii) Highmoor Footpaths – Submitted by Sean Clarke, Footpath Warden
- iv) Reading Lions Cricket Club – Presented by Babu Loganathan, representative of the Cricket Club.

The organisations were thanked for submitting their reports and they would be available on the Parish Council web site. www.highmoorparishcouncil.gov.uk

8. **Report on Asian Hornets** - Sue Abbott, a local Beekeeper, attended the meeting to present information on Asian Hornets, which were not native to the UK, but had recently been spotted in the UK.

Sue advised on how to identify an Asian Hornet, how they differed from European Hornets and the dangers and negative impact they presented to them and how they had spread around the UK so quickly.

It was vital to make communities aware of the Hornets and the Parish Council agreed to publish information in the local area, with advice on how individuals could help tackle the problem.

If any nests were spotted, they would be destroyed by professionals and residents could also have traps in their garden, to lure in the Queen and then they could be removed. They were an apex predator and could cause major ecological disruption if they continued to breed.

Traps could be purchased for £23 each and Sue and her colleague Caroline, offered to complete training sessions on how to use the traps and how to monitor them.

There was also an element of health issues to humans with the introduction of the Asian Hornet because the UK population were not used to their stings and there was the potential for an adverse reaction.

Sue was thanked for her report and information would be shared in the community to raise the profile of the issue and make residents aware.

9. **Questions from electors who were on the Highmoor electoral roll** – There were no questions.

(Meeting closed at 7.55 pm)

