

**HOLT COMMUNITY COUNCIL - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 15th JANUARY 2024 AT 7-00PM AT THE KENYON HALL, HOLT.**

PRESENT: Councillors: Mr J Cubitt, Mr S Lewis, Mr D Bithell, Mr D Powell, Mr A Jones, Mr D Munnerley, Mrs G Jones, Ms A Shone Mr G Mitchell, Clerk

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Morris, Mr J Hughes, Mr J Pridding

The meeting was formally opened by the Chairperson, Mr J Cubitt, who welcomed everyone. There were reports of 2 recent deaths of either Holt residents or persons with Holt connections and a silence was held in respect of the passing of Mr Billy Jones and Ms Kerry Ann Ellison.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: There were no requests for any amendments and the minutes of the November meeting were accepted as a true record; Proposed Mrs G Jones, seconded Ms A Shone.

POLICE REPORT: There was once again no Police presence at the meeting, but the Clerk had received an email from PCSO Lisa-Marie Davies advising that there had been 2 incidents in Holt reported to the Police in November. A report for December had been requested but to date, had not been received.

ITEM 1: MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

1.COMMUNITY GARDENERS: As per the minutes of the November meeting, a meeting was held, initially at Holt Cross, between members of Holt Gardeners, representatives of WCBC, North Wales Wildlife Trust, Port Sunlight Angling Club, and other interested parties; Councillors J Cubitt, Mrs G Jones, Mr D Munnerley, and the Clerk, Mr G Mitchell, also attended. Mr Bob Campbell outlined the vision for the Nature and Heritage Reserve and the attendees walked down to the Castle and alongside the River Dee, to Dee Lane to look at the proposed area and to get an idea of what is involved; discussions were held on the way, especially with regard to wildlife, habitat, potential costs and sources of funding. The meeting finished back at Holt Cross and Mr Campbell thanked everyone for attending and advised he would send out an email with the area highlighted and to invite attendees to put forward ideas.

The Clerk advised the Councillors that an email had been received from Holt Gardeners, requesting that the hedge by the "Peace Border" at Holt Cemetery be cut; the Clerk has asked Mr S Jones to cut the hedge on both sides.

2. CHURCH GREEN BENCHES: Councillor J Pridding had advised at the last meeting that he would speak to a local company, Allweld Engineering, to fabricate retaining brackets for the benches and to install the benches on the Church Green; Allweld have agreed to do the work and it is hoped that the benches will be installed soon.

3. FINANCES: It was agreed that Finances would be discussed under the Agenda item (a), Budget Approval and Precept Setting 2024

4. SKILLS TRAINING: Mr Powell was thanked for all the work that had gone into creating the Skills Matrix; Mr Powell had sent out an email to Councillors suggesting which courses may be beneficial to their work as Councillors and which aligned with the areas of interest highlighted in the Skills and Training

Survey previously completed by Councillors. Mr Powell highlighted that a Skills and Training Plan was a Council requirement, as was the need to improve and enhance Councillors knowledge in certain regulatory areas. The Clerk had distributed a list of available courses and content, as well as training dates.

The cost of each course, which is run by One Voice Wales, is £60 and there is a small bursary available of up to a total of £100 per financial year. A discussion was held regarding budgets and costs and the Clerk advised that there were available funds for Councillors to complete any identified training needs. Mr J Cubitt had already advised on a course that he would like to undertake, and other Councillors were advised to contact the Clerk with their requirements.

5. DEFIBRILLATOR: The Clerk advised that he had not yet managed to speak to anyone at Bellis Bros to ask if they were still happy to have an additional defibrillator sighted outside and near to the entrance of the Garden Centre. However, he had left a message with staff and was hopeful that agreement would be given very soon.

6. PLAY EQUIPMENT: The Clerk said that he had met with Mr J Catherall to discuss a quote for the painting of the play equipment and would be sending details of the requirements soon.; it was suggested that possibly other local decorators, such as Mr A Rigby in Farndon, may also be willing to quote to do the work.

7. ALLOTMENTS: The Clerk advised that he had put some temporary signs on the gate from Chester Lane onto the allotments instructing that the gate was to be kept closed at all times except when in use by allotment holders and the gate to be closed each night. Also, no cars are allowed to be parked overnight. While putting up the signs, the gentleman who parks his car at the allotments arrived, so the Clerk advised him that it was against allotment regulations for cars to be left overnight; the gentleman agreed to move the car and to not park there again.

ITEM 2: CORRESPONDENCE:

8. The Clerk read out to the Councillors the content of emails he had received from a concerned local resident, regarding the Planning application for the “Land Off Bryn Lane, Wrexham, P/2023/0497”, so called Utopia City. The writer, who lives on Francis Lane, was concerned that Holt Community Council had not made any recorded comments about the application. The Clerk had emailed back to advise that the application had been discussed at the September meeting, but as the Council had previously been advised that the application would not be considered until the Local Development Plan (LDA) was adopted, and that, at that time, no decision had been made regarding the LDA, accordingly, no comment had been recorded. The Clerk advised that until he had received the emails, no one associated with the Council had received any representation from any member of the public, and if any comment had been received, this would have been discussed and passed on to the relevant Planning Officer. The Council are aware that some residents may be affected if the application is passed but there may be employment opportunities created for residents of Holt both in the construction and completed development.

9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

a) Extension to External Home Office, 3 The Gardens, Holt; the Clerk had contacted the relevant Planning Officer and passed on the Council's concerns regarding this application; the Planning Officer had visited the site and was assured that the building was only used as an office, and the toilets were needed to ensure anyone in the house is not disturbed. The application had subsequently been passed.

b). The Clerk had spoken to Councillor Morris because of concerns raised regarding work being done to Bridgewater, Church Street, Holt. Although the property is in the Conservation Area, the front wall and garden had been removed and no planning permission had come before the Council. Councillor Morris had contacted the Planning office to request a visit be made to the property.

ITEM 3: AGENDA:

10. BUDGET APPROVAL AND PRECEPT SETTING: Previous to the meeting the Clerk had distributed Draft Budget Notes, the November Finance Narrative, and a chart showing receipts and payments figures for 22/23, 23/24 (to date) and potential budget for 24/25; the Clerk had a number of meetings with Mr Paul Hinchliffe and the Chair, Mr Cubitt, had attended a meeting in December in order to arrive at a figure to recommend as a precept figure for Holt CC for 2024/25. Points noted were that utility costs were still higher than previously budgeted and not likely to decrease soon; also, costs for maintaining the cemetery were likely to be higher as Mr E Jones was retiring. The Clerk had been informed that WCBC rates increase was likely to be in the region of 8-10%, (some N Wales Councils are looking at 12%), while the increase for work done by WCBC for Holt CC such as Play Equipment Maintenance and Inspections was 6.7%.

Although nothing had been spent on capital expenditure so far this year, it had been suggested that a similar amount should be allocated in case it is needed. It had been agreed that the recommended budget increase to be put to the Council should be 4.6% (October CPI) giving a new precept for Holt for 24/25 of £36,228.00, an increase of £1593 over 23/24.

A discussion was held and various suggestions of increases from nil to 8% were considered.

Proposed by Mr J Cubitt, seconded by Mr D Bithell, agreed by majority of Councillors, that Budget be adopted and Precept Increase as detailed of 4.6%; Councillor S Lewis abstained.

11. FINANCE: Income for November was £406 and Expenditure £7352; Expenditure included costs for Hedge Cutting on Francis lane, new benches for Church Green, S137 and S19 Grants, (£3300), purchase of .Gov Domain Name for website. Proposed Mr A Jones, seconded Mr D Bithell, agreed by all.

12. SPEEDING AND SPEED SIGNS: the Clerk advised that many cars, especially in the morning and home time in the evening, were still exceeding, not only the new default speed limit but the old limit of 30mph. The Clerk had done some checks, and it appeared the interactive speed signs on Wrexham Road and Frog Lane, had been switched off; it had been advised by WCBC that if the signs could not be amended to the new speed limit, they would need to be switched off. The Clerk has contacted WCBC to find out if the signs can be amended to the new speed limit and is waiting to be contacted by someone from WCBC. A discussion was held as to who owned the interactive signs,

WCBC or Holt CC; as no-one could definitively say, the Clerk was asked to try to establish ownership.

13. WEBSITE AND HOSTING: the Clerk informed the Council that the Holt Community Council website was now live at <http://holtcommunitycouncil.gov>. The website is restricted to Community Council business and Minutes of Meetings for the last 2 years plus some archived minutes from earlier years are on the website; it is hoped to fill in any gaps from earlier years in the near future. It is hoped to add other documents onto the website soon. The Clerk suggested that areas of the village that are the responsibility of the Community Council, such as the Cemetery, Car Park, Toilets etc should have a brief description on the website which was agreed by all present. At the November meeting, the Clerk had advised the Councillors that Matt Rowlands, who designed the website, was willing to do the hosting for the website at a cost of £20/month; the Clerk had asked Mr Rowlands for a breakdown of what the hosting would entail which was passed on to the Councillors; the Clerk stressed the need to make sure that the website was available at all times and did not end up like the village website; after a discussion, it was agreed to go ahead with the hosting of the website by Matt Rowlands. Proposed Mr D Powell, seconded by Mr D Munnerley, agreed.

ITEM 4: ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

At the previous meeting, a discussion had been held regarding the grass cutting at Dee Park Play Area; the Clerk had spoken to WCBC and been advised that for some historical reason, Holt did not pay for grass cutting or litter picking at either the Dee Park or Church Green Play Areas. If the Council were to enter into a formal SLA with WCBC, it would be at a present cost of £751/year for litter picking and £171/cut for grass cutting, with a minimum of 4 cuts a year undertaken; the charge would increase at a minimum 2%/year, with an increase of 6.7% in April 2024. After a discussion, it was agreed to leave the agreement as is, but to monitor the timing of the grass cuts to see whether additional grass cuts by a private contractor would be needed. It was noted that how fast the grass grew and needed cutting was weather dependent so that it may be difficult to judge over one year.

MR S Lewis advised that one of the saplings planted at Hillfield POS was very near to an established tree; Mr D Munnerley agreed and advised that now was a good time to move the sapling to a better place and that he was willing to do this. It was agreed for Mr Munnerley and Mr Lewis to do this work.

ACCOUNTS: Already pre-approved for payment in December

PAYMENTS FOR DECEMBER

3028 – AVOW, Salary, Wage, Charge	£777.50
3029 – Eric Jones, Grass cuts, cemetery, all areas except bridge	£220.00
3030 – J&L Garden Services, Grass Cuts Hillfield POS, NOV	£145.00
3031 – Kenyon Hall Committee, Hire Hall, NOV	£30.40
3032 – Nightingale House Hospice, S137 Grant	£250.00
3033 – Family Friends, Salvation Army, S137 Grant	£100.00

3034 – Wales Air Ambulance, S137 Grant	£100.00
3035 – Macmillan Cancer Support, S137 Grant	£100.00
3036 – Matt Rowlands, 2nd Payment Website Design	£275.00
3037 – Hope House Hospice, S137 Grant	£250.00
3039 – Wrexham Sounds Replacement Cheque S137 2022	£100.00
3041 – Erlas Victorian Walled Garden, S137 Grant	£100.00
DD - Scottish Power, Energy Usage, Toilet area	£975.47

**NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE KENYON HALL ON
TUESDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2024 AT 7-00PM**

