

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR HACKLETON 11th MAY 2023

The Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council Pam Heap welcomed everybody to the meeting. Apologies were received from the Chairman of the Parish Council Frances Billingham. There were 55 residents and/or stakeholders present.

Freedom of the Parish

Presented to Godfrey Tobutt for his outstanding contribution over many years to our local community.

Hackleton Parish Council – Chairman’s Report 2022-23

During the last year the Parish Council has endeavoured to improve the lives of everyone in Hackleton, Piddington, Horton, Preston Deanery and St George’s Fields and part of Wootton Fields. Here is a flavour of what the Parish Council has been up to since March 2022.

We Delivered on Our Big Project – The Outdoor Gym and Running Track

At this meeting last year we presented to you our big plans for the installation of an outdoor gym and running track on the recreation ground.

The installation began in September with the grand opening in November. I am sure that you will agree this is an amazing free resource for our whole community which provides:

Regular exercise

Free to use – no fees

Convenience of location – central to the parish

Year-round availability – with non-slip hand grips and wet pour surfacing

A full body workout whilst enjoying fresh air and the great outdoors

Feel-good fitness – we all know the proven benefits of exercising outdoors in relieving stress and anxiety and boosting an individual’s MH.

The gym comes with the Caloo App which is free to download and enables you to tailor an exercise program to your individual requirements and records your progress. I am sure you will agree this is an amazing resource for our whole community.

A great weekend to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

The firework and beacon lighting event on 2nd June last year, was an extremely poignant and enjoyable event with fireworks, singing, a lone piper and beacon lighting. Attendance was very high and all feedback received was positive. Grateful thanks to the organising committee for all of their hard work.

The Fete on the 4th June was also very well attended despite the weather being against us. Everybody enjoyed the dog show, bake-off competition, marching band, vintage vehicles and so much more. Again thanks go to the organising committee who had done a great job with two events in two days. A grand total of £1,005.00 was raised over the weekend which was donated to the Village Firework Team.

Support for the Environment

- The Parish Council has declared a Climate Emergency and put in place a budget of £10,000 for the 2023/24 financial year to support local projects which tackle climate change
- A Wildlife, Biodiversity & Environment Working Party has been set up which is running open meetings on a quarterly basis. These meetings are exploring ways in which we can improve and support our environment. Once concrete plans (no pun intended!) have been drawn up, they will be presented to full council for approval and funding. The next meeting is Tuesday 6th June at 7pm in the Coffee Shop – talk to Alison for more details if you would like to get involved.
- Additional dog waste bins have been installed around the parish. Please use them or if they are full take your bags home and dispose of them in your black bins rather than leaving next to the bins, on the floor or indeed hung in trees!
- We have replaced some of the wooden fencing around the Recreation Ground and all of the benches in the football shelter
- We continue to use contractors to mow the Cemetery, Longland Meadow and the Recreation Ground
- New hedging plants and trees have been planted within the Parish
- Tree and hedge works have been undertaken to improve safety, visibility and the general appearance of our locality
- The Cemetery Extension has been visually improved and grass seeded.
- 250 native daffodils were purchased by the parish council and planted by our amazing Longland Meadow volunteers. Wildflower seed has also been purchased for the Butterfly Patch and we look forward to seeing this in full bloom shortly
- We would like to thank our local Wombles for all of their hard work litter picking around the Parish

Communicating with our residents

- We have seven noticeboards around the parish which always have our agendas posted on to them, all information about the Council can be found on our website
- We are using the local Facebook pages more regularly and continue to fund and contribute to the Parish Mag' which I am sure you will agree is a great asset to the parish and our thanks go to Alan the Editor.
- We are also pleased to offer residents the chance to speak in person with the Parish Clerk at our monthly surgeries which take place in Coffee@Carey and are advertised in the Parish Mag'
- Alternatively please do email or telephone Alison our Clerk and she will be more than happy to help or signpost you in the right direction

Supporting local groups

- Grant funding has been provided to Just Sing! The Firework Team and The Denton Surgery Patient Transport Scheme
- We also continue to provide financial support to the ABILITY Community Transport Scheme.
- If any local organisations would like to be added to our website to advertise services or events, please contact Alison.
- We would like this coming year to put together a directory of voluntary services and local businesses in order to promote what we have available within the parish so please send Alison your contact details and service delivery details

Highways

- We continue to report all highway and footpath issues to West Northants including potholes, blocked drains, unsafe surfacing etc. We urge you all to report issues on Northampton Street Doctor because the more reports they receive the more likely they are to be remedied

- We have had site meetings regarding blocked drains and gullies and continue to try and put pressure on Highways for remedial works
- We are in regular contact with the local Police team and the mobile speed camera is often seen in the parish.
- Our own portable Speed Indicator Device is moved around various locations to try and encourage drivers to slow down
- Unitary Councillor Fiona Cole has been working with the parish council and residents regarding damage to parked vehicles on Brafield Road caused by speeding or distracted drivers
- The Parish Council investigated employing a school crossing patrol but as we are not a highway authority, we are not able to do this. We continue to look at safety issues on the Main Road and press Highways for action
- We are trying to get a Community Speedwatch team of volunteers together so if you are interested or would like more details please come and see us afterwards
- Following pressure from the Parish Council A 30 mph speed limit is to be introduced through Preston Deanery

Parish Council News

- The Parish Council has signed the Civility & Respect Pledge and adopted a Dignity at Work Policy which supports the ethos of the Civility and Respect Pledge
- During the year we have said farewell to Lynn Nash as a Parish Councillor, thanks go to Lynn for her long service to the Council; and we now welcome Wendy Blake onto the Council. I would like to thank all councillors for their continued hard work and dedication to our parish. They are all holders of public office who volunteer their time for free
- We are very lucky to have Alison Benson as our Clerk who works extremely hard to ensure the Council is run legally and efficiently whilst also implementing and overseeing all council decisions and projects
- Claire Sparkes our very conscientious litter picker also has additional duties in Piddington Cemetery and on the Recreation Ground and we thank her for her diligent work
- Steve Taylor has been our Groundsman for just over a year and is doing an excellent job looking after the Parish
- Our Planning Committee works very hard in responding to planning consultations issued by West Northants Planning Department and ensures that the Hackleton Neighbourhood Development Plan is fully considered and adhered to
- Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk attend many meetings, conferences and training events which over the last 12-months have included: Climate Conference, Northants ACRE networking events, NCalc conference, Rights of Way training, procurement training, site meetings with highways, Grand Union Housing Group and numerous local stakeholders and organisations
- The Parish Council meets monthly (except August) with all agendas, minutes and information available on our website.

Our next big project

We have recently completed the tender process and I am delighted to confirm that Hags Ltd have been awarded the contract to replace the play equipment. The design offers over 50 fun activities for children 0-12 years old supporting their developmental milestones whilst providing an amazing play facility.

Other projects

We are currently negotiating with Grand Union Housing Group to take over the open green spaces Infront of The Crescent and at the top and bottom of Carey Road. This will ensure that the open spaces are better maintained and cared for.

We are looking to install additional seating near to the outdoor gym on the recreation ground so that residents can sit awhile after their workout or just sit and watch the world go by.

Proposals from the wildlife, biodiversity & environment group should be presented for approval very soon and we are excited as to see what projects will be put forward. If anybody has any ideas as to what they would like us to do please let us know.

Guest Speaker

Simon Fowler Forest Centre Manager, Salcey Forest gave a very informative talk about Salcey Forest and how it was a quiet destination until the Pandemic when it became a hotspot for people to get out and about and this has continued as we have emerged from the Pandemic. Whilst this is great as it allows Salcey Forest to be enjoyed by many more people it means an increase in cars, people and dogs which all need to be managed in some way. The Centre relies on funding from membership and car park fees which is all re-invested in the site. This has recently allowed for the refurbishment of two children's play area and the installation of more equipment for the younger children. Unfortunately as we know the Tree Top Walk has been dismantled as the repair costs were in the region of £1.2m. The area however has not been given over to forestry but retained as recreation space. There is a new path which follows the original Tree Top Walk with new planting and an oak gazebo is to be erected to provide an undercover outdoor space for wellbeing opportunities such as yoga and mindfulness.

There are varied events in the Forest including the Saturday 9am Park Run which is free to enter. Cycle hire is also now from the Forest Centre. An Ancient Oaks Project is underway looking at the health of and improving the habitat of six ancient oak trees which are 400 – 600 years old and new signage all about them is to be installed. Each year there is a children's character trail and this year's theme is Zog the Dragon.

Parking charges have had to be increased but annual membership is only £52.00.

Forestry work has become more proactive in the last 5-years with more staff and increased budget. Trees are being thinned by 20-30% in blocks to let light and water in to encourage growth. A Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase Forest Design Plan is currently out for consultation and can be found at https://consult.forestryengland.uk/forest-districts/salcey-forests-plan/user_uploads/salcey---yardley-chase-forests-plan-2023.pdf

Many of the oak trees in the Forest haven't grown for 30-years and are suffering from Acute Oak Decline. Due to the impact of Chalara ash dieback which is an airborne fungus the main focus over the next 2- years will be the removal of ash from within one tree length of public highways and access routes within the forests. This will result in the removal of over 1000 trees and the gaps left will self-generate with seedlings in the future.

Informal Session

Residents were then invited to speak to local groups and stakeholders who were positioned around the room and included: Hackleton Primary School, Hackleton WI, Hackleton Short Mat Bowls, Just Sing! Piddington Churchyard Group, Longland Meadow Volunteer Group, Hackleton Village Hall, Hackleton Football Club, Neighbourhood Police Team, Neighbourhood Watch, Police Liaison Representative, Unitary Councillor Fiona Cole, The Parish Council, The Roman Villa, Team Thomas, Resilience and Innovation Northants, Fete/Funday 2023, Salcey Forest and The Fireworks Society

Final Thoughts

Pam Heap invited any questions and as there were none, she brought the meeting to a close with the following comments: West Northants Unitary Council is responsible for many local services including Highways, footpaths, refuse collection and planning. The Parish Council is responsible for the outdoor gym,

the play equipment, street lighting, dog waste bins and is always looking at ways to improve our parish. What we do is funded through the precept and all expenditure is subject to extremely rigorous scrutiny. We couldn't do what we do without the people involved either directly or indirectly. We would like to thank you all for your hard work and commitment to our community. We hope that you will agree that the Parish Council provides good value for money. If there is anything that you would like to suggest to us that we could do to make our parish an even better place to live, work and play then please do contact us.

Refreshments were enjoyed throughout the evening. The meeting closed at 8:45pm.