



PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 10th June 2024

Minutes of the annual meeting of Layer de la Haye Parish Council
held on Monday 20th June 2024, Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7.30pm.

Chair	Councillor Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE	Present
Vice Chair	Councillor Mrs C Chambers	Present
	Councillor Mrs S Bennett	Present
	Councillor Mr C. Chambers	Present
	Councillor Mrs M Holmes	Present
	Councillor Mrs S.E. Hughes	Present
	Councillor Mr I.P. Moore	Present
	Councillor Mr P.R. Pyke	Present
	Councillor Mr M Salmon	Present
In attendance	None	

1 **APOLOGIES** - Apologies were received from Councillor Kevin Bently and Councillor Andrew Ellis.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – NIL.

3 MINUTES

- a) On proposal of Cllr Mrs Holmes, seconded by Cllr Mrs S.E. Hughes, it was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting of the council held 13th May 2024 as a true record, all agreed, and duly signed by the chair.
- b) Minutes of the personnel committee meeting held on 20th May 2024 were **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.
- c) **CONSIDER** recommendations of the personnel committee: A new Clerk and RFO has been appointed, starting date 20th May 2024. All were in agreement with this decision.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (shall not exceed 15 minutes)

- a) **RECEIVE** reports from City and County Councillors: None due to absence
- b) **RECEIVE** public comments: No members of the public present

5 GOVERNANCE

- a) **RESOLVED** to adopt new Standing Orders (previously circulated) on the proposal of Cllr Mrs Chambers and Cllr Mrs Maggie Holmes, all in agreement.
- b) **REVIEW** following policies and procedures (Ongoing review to be completed by year end) - **DEFERRED**
 - i. Complaints Procedure
 - ii. Publication Scheme for requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000
 - iii. Data Retention Policy
 - iv. Policy for dealing with the press and media
 - v. Allotment agreement terms and conditions
- c) **RECEIVE** ICO publication scheme report from councillors responsible for freedom of information control - *Councillor Mrs S Hughes, Councillor Mrs C Chambers*
 - **DEFERRED** to allow Cllr Mrs C Chambers and Cllr Mrs S Hughes to review the proposed documents
- d) **RECEIVE** Business continuity and IT update: gov.uk domain, website, emails, data security – *Clerk and RFO*
The Clerk and RFO gave a quick review of current activity:
 - i) A new web site has been set up at the instigation of the locum Clerk and RFO with ParishOnline using a shorter domain name. It had been resolved at the previous meeting that the domain name would not be changed so the current Clerk and RFO will contact ParishOnline to update them and prepare the way for the new web site to go live.
 - ii) For business continuity, the locum Clerk and RFO had sought to create an environment with MicroShade without seeking prior approval of the Council. The Council has received separate advice from a trusted commercial source and wishes to pursue that path instead. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk and RFO will be introduced to the company that will undertake the work of setting up a new laptop, Microsoft 365 Business and SharePoint (plus the suite of Microsoft Office products). Proposed by Cllr Mr P Pyke and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Bennett, all agreed.
 - iii) Given the level of change, the order of action is important – it was **RESOLVED** that the following order of actions be undertaken – New laptop, Microsoft 365 etc first, ParishOnline second once new laptop setup and all councillors able to access their email using Outlook. Proposed by Cllr Mr P Pyke and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Bennett, all agreed.
 - iv) It was **RESOLVED** that the clerk email address would remain the same. Proposed by Cllr Mr I Moore and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Hughes, all agreed.
- e) **RECEIVED** the NALC The Good Councillor's Guide 2024 new edition was received by the councillors.
- f) **RECEIVED** 2024/25 councillor training schedule was received. Cllr Mrs C Chambers noted that it was resolved previously that the Code of Conduct training must be completed by all councillors. Cllr Mrs C Chambers asked that the Clerk and RFO research the option of online training which all would prefer.



- g) Register of Interests: Following the departure of the locum Clerk and RFO, a small number of completed forms were located. The Clerk and RFO will circulate the blank template for filling in – the list of those needing to do so to be communicated separately via email post meeting.

6 PLANNING decisions/applications were **CONSIDERED**.

It was noted that one of the applications (202462) on the agenda was not on the previously circulated planning portal summary document. This was caused by the changeover of Clerk and should not occur again. All welcomed the new format commenting that it enabled them to easily review planning applications detail.

It was also noted that councillors attended the CCC Local Plan meeting covering our area. All made CCC very aware that no new housing was wanted as the village had already grown by 10% with the inclusion of the Denbury Homes site on The Folley. Time is needed to measure the impact of this growth on the village.

7 FINANCE

- a) **RECEIVE** finance report (previously circulated) - 2024/25 budget review, transfer £10,000 to Reserve account.
The finance report from the locum Clerk and RFO was reviewed. The transfer of an additional £10,000 to reserves is not possible as funds do not allow.
- b) **RECEIVE** and **CONFIRM** bank reconciliation for the months of April & May 2024 - *for signature by 2 members*.
The bank reconciliation in the format used by the locum Clerk and RFO was received and reviewed. Cllr Mrs C Chambers, Cllr Mrs S Hughes and Cllr Mr P Pyke were unable to sign off the reconciliation due to the way the report had been compiled as well as the reserves account bank statement not being available until the day of the meeting. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE and Cllr Mrs M Holmes would arrange to meet the Clerk and RFO to agree a new format that simplifies the process. Following this the reconciliation will be signed off as required. Proposed by Cllr Mr M Salmon and seconded by Cllr Mr C Chambers, all agreed.
- c) **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** accounts. Accounts for payment were received and approved
- d) **RECEIVE** report from Councillors responsible for Internal Financial Control - *Cllr Mrs Chambers, Councillor Pyke*
Cllr Mrs C Chambers and Cllr Mr P Pyke were not required to produce this report as the new Clerk and RFO is currently reviewing all governance processes and controls. New controls and processes will be presented to councillors for approval.
- e) **RESOLVE** bank account administration, signatories, registration of the Responsible Financial Officer. **DEFERRED**
- f) **CONSIDER** and **APPROVE** the Statement of Accounts and Reconciliation for the year ending 31 March 2024 - *for signature by the chair, signed* - Received and signed by Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE.
- g) **CONFIRM** the assets list for the year 2023/24 and set an appropriate minimum (replacement) value of assets for the asset register. **DEFERRED**
- h) **RECEIVE** and **REVIEW** the report from the Internal Auditor and **NOTE** recommendations
The Internal Auditor report was received and discussed at length. Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE will document areas of disagreement with the audit report whilst also acknowledging recommendations that need to be implemented. It was **RESOLVED** that a separate meeting will be convened to allow all to have their say in the production of this document. Proposed by Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE and seconded by Cllr Mrs M Holmes, all agreed.
- i) **CONSIDER** 2023/24 AGAR for submission to the External Auditor
 - i. Section 1: Annual Governance Statement - **CONSIDER** questions and **RESPOND** accordingly, any 'No' responses to be accompanied by written statement (text agreed by council) - *for signature by the chair*
 - ii. Section 2: Accounting Statements - **CONSIDER** and **AGREE** the statement figures - *for signature by the chair*
The AGAR forms were received and discussed. Responses were added to the forms where appropriate and the forms duly signed by the chair Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE and the Clerk and RFO Mr Mark Large.
- j) **NOTE** the dates for the Notice of Public Rights
Following the signing of the AGAR form at this meeting, the dates for the Notice of Public Rights were reviewed. A fresh copy will be printed (due to issues with the office printer) and actioned – Cllr Mrs M.A Hughes MBE to call extra ordinary meeting.
- k) **RECEIVED** the Insurance renewal conformation for 2024/25
- l) **RECEIVED** public liability certificates for 2024/25 from contractors

8 PARISH MATTERS

- a) CCC Have Your Say campaign to 17 July 2024 was **RECEIVED**.
- b) Bluetongue Virus - Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs was **RECEIVED**.
- c) Essex Highways Winter salt bag partnership scheme closing date 22 July 2024 was **RECEIVED**.
- d) ECC launch of updated Climate Advice Packs for Residents, Businesses, Schools, Early years and childcare settings and an 'Easy Read' Climate Advice Pack were **RECEIVED**.
- e) Open spaces, parish maintenance, bus shelter roof/guttering repairs - *Councillors Mr I Moore & Mr M Salmon*
Cllr Mr I Moore thanked Cllr Mr M Salmon for clearing the gutters of the bus shelter. It is apparent that there is still an ongoing leak which will need attention. Cllr Mr I Moore to review and advise.



f) Defibrillator - *Councillor Mrs. M. A Hughes MBE*

The football club have offered part funding for a new defibrillator at the tennis courts. Cllr Mr I Moore reported that the new device could probably be fitted to the side of the existing power distribution box meaning that fitting would be more straight forward than might otherwise be the case. It was **RESOLVED** to proceed with this proposal. Cllr Mrs S Bennett to source extra funding.

g) Friends of Layer School – Construction of new outside classroom has commenced -*Cllr Mrs Chambers*

h) Highways: potholes/road works meeting with developers and highway engineers - *Cllr M. A. Hughes MBE*
Nothing to report this month.

i) Layer Road bridge area road safety, Malting Green

Councillors discussed the ongoing issue of road safety at the Kingsford Bridge on Layer Road which has once again been badly damaged by a car accident only days after previous accident damage repairs had been completed. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE would talk to Cllr Kevin Bently about the issue to seek advice and possible routes to action to improve safety of the public. Proposed by Cllr Mr P Pyke and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Hughes, all agreed.

j) Recreation ground gates and equipment

Cllr Mrs M Holmes and Cllr Mrs C Chambers discussed the conclusion of their investigation into appropriate seating and improved gates for the recreation ground. It was **RESOLVED** that benches/seat and gates would be procured from PlayQuip who returned the most cost-effective quote. Proposed by Cllr Mrs C Chambers and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Hughes, all agreed.

k) Horses – routes through village/Solar Farm *Cllr M. A. Hughes MBE*

Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE contacted the Round Estate to discuss who have declined the request to establish a bridal path across their land. It was also suggested that they make direct contact with the Round Estate. Contact details were supplied.

l) Malting Green *Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE*

A route of passage across Malting Green to one of the houses needs repair. It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE will review the previous correspondence on this issue and arrange a letter to the owner of the house advising what the position of the council is. Proposed by Cllr Mrs C Chambers and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Hughes, all agreed

9 CLERK'S REPORT - correspondence received, office supplies, printer, laptop, monitor, shredder, Amazon business account proposal and appropriate controls.

The Clerk and RFO notified councillors of correspondence received and replies sent.

It was proposed by the Clerk and RFO that, to enhance governance, an Amazon Business Account (free) be created to allow the purchase of items for the office (stationary, office equipment, other small items for councillors as required). This would remove the need for the Clerk and RFO or councillors to require reimbursement from council funds to their personal accounts. It was also noted that appropriate governance would need to be defined (the sort of items that can be purchased without additional approval, the maximum transaction value without additional approval and potentially the maximum monthly spends without additional approval). It was **RESOLVED** that this be actioned provided the Model Financial Regulations allow it. The Clerk and RFO to check the regulations and advise councillors accordingly. Proposed by Cllr Mrs C Chambers and seconded by Cllr Mrs S Hughes, agreed by all subject to the financial regulations check being positive.

10 BRIEF REPORTS OF MEMBERS - matters for forthcoming agenda.

- Cllr Mr I Moore raised the report from a member of the public about rubbish build up at a property in the New Cut area. Councillors were not sure of the status of that property (privately owned or housing association etc.). Cllr Mrs M. A. Hughes MBE to investigate.
- Cllr Mrs M Holmes raised the issue of a combined football/netball installation. The Clerk and RFO commented that there is an example of such an installation at the new estate in Tollgate opposite the Lakelands Primary School.
- Cllr Mr P Pyke notified the meeting that the Stanway Roads Policing unit will soon close and be transferred to Boreham Wood.

11 NEXT MEETING - to confirm 08 July 2024, Layer Village Hall, 7.30pm

Close of meeting - Members of the public leave the meeting and the closed section commences.

12 The closed section of the meeting was convened to discuss personnel matters.