

HOPTON AND COTON PARISH COUNCIL
NOTICE OF MEETING
WEDNESDAY 13TH MARCH 2024

Email: hoptonandcotonparishclerk@gmail.com
Website: www.hoptonandcotonparishcouncil.org.uk

To: **Members of Hopton and Coton Parish Council**

Dear Councillors,

You are summoned to attend a meeting of **Hopton and Coton Parish Council** which will be held on **Wednesday 13th March 2024** at 7:00PM at **Hopton Village Hall, Wilmore Hill Lane, Hopton, Stafford ST18 0AW**.

Members are asked to inform the Clerk if they are unable to attend.

Yours sincerely

A. Mclean

Angela Mclean
Parish Clerk

Date of Notice: 19th February 2024

AGENDA

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TIME

- 10.1 Welcome and introduction by the Chairman
- 10.2 Introduction of Tim Gray and Paul Beedell of the representatives of Stafford Town Football Club to review contractual agreement for the use of the Football Pitches at Hopton Village Hall
- 10.3 Matters raised by the members of the public; up to a collective maximum of 20 minutes in duration; a member of the public may only speak for a maximum of 3 minutes
- 10.4 Close of Public Participation Time

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

- 10.5 To receive and approve apologies
- 10.6 Record declarations of interest from Councillors
- 10.7 To consider the minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 7th February 2024
- 10.8 To review the SPCA and Toplis Associates response to the CIO vote taken on 15th November 2023 and 7th February 2024
- 10.9 To discuss the implementation of the online project tracker and diary and its use and to review a project list to ensure all Councillors are aware of current projects and Councillor commitments
- 10.10 To discuss the update of the Parish Council website in terms of aesthetics and content
- 10.11 To discuss and finalise the transition of email accounts for HCPC to gov.uk email addresses
- 10.12 To review and ratify the Risk Assessment for 2024 for HCPC
- 10.13 To review and ratify the Asset Register for HCPC
- 10.14 To discuss Parish Boards refurbishment programme and receive an update on this area and access to all Parish Boards
- 10.15 To receive an update from the CIO working party group in relation to the Tenancy at Will and ongoing work
- 10.16 To assign a Councillor contact to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council for HS2
- 10.17 To assign a Councillor contact to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council for MOD4
- 10.18 To receive an update from the meeting with SAGE Housing and HCPC on behalf of Redrow residents on 1st March 2024
- 10.19 To receive an update from the SERCO meeting held 23rd February 2024 and assign a Councillor contact to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council
- 10.20 To receive an update from the St Mary's Gate working party group and a proposal to provide additional play equipment for the recreation area at St Mary's Gate
- 10.21 To receive an update from the working party group for the review and updating of the Council policies
- 10.22 To discuss the grass cutting agreement around the Parish and the schedule of cuts for the Football Pitches
- 10.23 To receive an update on the current and proposed contract for the Footballers for the use of the Football Pitches in Hopton
- 10.24 To discuss the repair of a bench located Wilmore Hill Lane
- 10.25 To agree and confirm GDPR training to be undertaken by SCC for the Council
- 10.26 To follow up on the planned Defibrillator training event to be held on 27th March 2024 and proposed Defibrillator for Hopton
- 10.27 To consider any planning matters
- 10.28 Financial Matters
 - 10.28.1 To discuss in detail the AGAR External Audit Findings for the Financial Year 2022-2023
 - 10.28.2 To discuss in detail the AGAR Internal Audit Findings for the Financial Year 2022-2023
 - 10.28.3 To consider the schedule of payments
 - 10.28.4 To provide an update on the change of Parish Council banking provider for the Current Account and Reserve Account from Natwest Bank to Unity Trust Bank and add a further Councillor to the banking system
 - 10.28.5 To discuss and approve the final budget and precept for the financial year 2024-25 and for Council to vote on the completion and approval of this and allocation of funds to areas with the Parish
 - 10.28.6 To receive an update of bank reconciliation to 29th February 2024
- 10.29 To review the resignation of the caretaker and discuss a replacement employee
- 10.30 To discuss the continued peer support for the Parish Clerk from Kim Squires of Toplis Associates
- 10.31 To confirm the date of the next planned public meeting

CLOSE OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TO PUBLIC
END

HOPTON AND COTON PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13TH MARCH 2024 AT 7:00PM HELD AT HOPTON VILLAGE HALL

Present :	Councillors	Cllr A Elkin Cllr C Rider Cllr P Cunningham Cllr S Mead Cllr M Notman Cllr J Watkins
	Borough Councillors	Cllr K Aspin Cllr F Beatty
	Parish Clerk	A Mclean
Members of the Public		Several members of the public present
Not in Attendance:	Councillors	Cllr S Spennewyn

AGENDA

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TIME

10.1 Welcome and introduction by the Chairman

The meeting was opened by the Vice Chair, Cllr C Rider, in Chairman, Cllr S Spennewyn's absence, in which several members of the public were in attendance.

10.2 Introduction of Tim Gray and Paul Beedell of the representatives of Stafford Town Football Club to review contractual agreement for the use of the Football Pitches at Hopton Village Hall

The introduction of Tim Gray and Paul Beedell representatives of Stafford Town Football Club and Nik Barron of Stafford Athletico Football Club to the meeting to review the contractual agreement for the use of the Football Pitches at Hopton Village Hall.

10.3 Matters raised by the members of the public; up to a collective maximum of 20 minutes in duration; a member of the public may only speak for a maximum of 3 minutes

Cllr F Beatty requested to speak to the meeting in relation to the newsletter circulated to Cllrs for March 2024, in which members of the public were informed if they would like a copy to contact the Parish Clerk.

She detailed the Conservative control of the Council is changing to Labour, in which this has put on hold the Local Plan. The process is required to be restarted and is a lengthy process to rewrite this document.

Cllr F Beatty spoke to confirm that the importance of the visiting economy to include swimming pools, bowling greens and tennis courts and stressed how important this industry is for the Borough to include visitor attractions.

She also stated that there is a potential for hotels to come into the Borough with planning to be commence at Aston Marina for a 4-5 star hotel.

Cllr F Beatty confirmed that the precept has remained the same, but overall Council Tax increased by 2% for 2024-25.

She confirmed that the Borough had bought the Guild Hall, in which would be renovated or sold on. In which the Borough Council will control it and partnership with a management company will be made at some stage.

Several members of the public were present at the meeting and the following questions asked:

Q: A resident spoke to detail serious of issues to include the stealing cars, prowling in Hopton and confirmed that the Police are aware of this issue as it was reported, but could the Parish Council contact the Police to follow this up?

A: A Mclean spoke to confirm that she would follow this matter up with Staffordshire Police and provide further information.

Q: A resident spoke with regard to the CIO and asked several questions:

The CIO have not produced annual accounts and nor submitted these to the Chairties Commission- 466 days overdue, why is this?

The CIO produce no minutes of meeting or provide agendas and publication of this, why is this?

The CIO show trustees that require to be removed to include, John Rogers and June Brown Bullivant and no evidence has been seen to suggest that this is being dealt with, why is this?

A: A Mclean spoke to confirm that she would forward these comments to the Chair of the CIO, Mr Lamond. The Council confirmed that a Tenancy at Will is due to be offered first and then subsequently followed by a lease. A resident spoke to confirm that the CIO not having access to their cheque book had elongated delays in getting things up to the date. A Mclean confirmed that this matter had since been resolved.

Q: The Caretaker of HCPC spoke to confirm some issues in relation to the letting of the Village Hall to include the booking of the premises and some bookings turning up early and also ensuring that payments are made for each booking and that the building is left in the same condition it was found to include heaters and lights being turned off and possibility of security deposits being taken. He also spoke to reiterate his request for the carpets to be cleaned.

A: A Mclean spoke to confirm that she would relay these concerns onto the CIO working party group and also the Chair of the CIO, Mr Lamond.

Q: A resident spoke to request a bin to be added to the end of Brickhill Lane for dog walkers.

A: A Mclean spoke to confirm that she would follow this request up with SBC.

Q: A visiting member of SALT spoke to request a donation for the common burial ground in SALT in terms of an annual plea for support and maintenance from HCPC.

A: A Mclean spoke to confirm that this request would be added to the next meeting agenda.

10.4 Close of Public Participation Time

The Chair closed the Public Participation Time to enable the Parish Council Meeting to commence and Cllr C Rider spoke to ask if any persons present objected to the voice recording of the meeting of which no one present declined.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

10.5 To receive and approve apologies

Apologies were received for Borough Cllr; Cllr F Beatty and Chairman, Cllr S Spennewyn.
Cllr K Aspin and Cllr S Spennewyn.

10.6 Record declarations of interest from Councillors

Cllr P Cunningham made a declaration of interest in relation to HS2 in which he disclosed he had received compensation from HS2.

10.7 To consider the minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 7th February 2024

The minutes of the Parish Meeting on Wednesday 7th February 2024 were considered, approved and duly signed as a correct record of the meeting.

10.8 To discuss the grass cutting agreement around the Parish and the schedule of cuts for the Football Pitches

(Formally)

10.22)

Tim Gray and Paul Beedell representatives of Stafford Town Football Club and Nik Barron of Stafford Athletic Football Club have been invited to the meeting to review the contractual agreement for the use of the Football Pitches at Hopton Village Hall.

It was discussed that the grass cutting needs be completed as per a schedule due to issues with the pitch and upkeep of the grass and set dates for the grass cutting. For the usage the contract is expected to start from April 2024 on a monthly rolling contract, as if the lease is complete, the CIO would be responsible for the grass cutting and footballers income.

Tim Gray spoke to confirm that the pitch had only been used twice since September 2023.

Paul Beedell, Chairman of Stafford Town spoke to confirm that the loss of facilities for football clubs is huge, and he confirmed that they hope to utilise the facilities and potentially put more Teams on the pitch to generate more revenue for HCPC.

He confirmed that the standard of pitches are poor. They also are required to undertake line marking at around a cost of £200.00 per annum, which requires ongoing relining and upkeep of pitch, as some areas of the pitch are holding water and this is a challenge in which needs addressing as three areas are water logged and sunk underneath which is a safety issue to players. He agreed that he would be happy to meet with Trent GM if the Council proceeded to use these are a contractor for the grass cutting.

Cllr C Rider spoke to confirm that the pitch should be a safe and acceptable standard and agreed that the cost needs to reflect the pitch available and usage.

Stafford Town FC current usage: 2 x Teams- Saturday and Sunday.

Stafford Athletico FC- Usage on a Saturday morning for SEN sessions 9:30am onwards.

It was agreed that this agenda item would be reviewed and added to the next meeting agenda for final clarification in relation to the usage and charge to each team.

It was discussed by Council that possible sponsorship could be discussed for each team.

10.9 To discuss the implementation of the online project tracker and diary and its use and to review a project list to ensure all Councillors are aware of current projects and Councillor commitments

A Mclean presented her findings into other solutions to include Office 365, in which the monthly cost per user to access a shared document, would not be justified at £5.99 Gross per month per user.

It was agreed that a document would be shared monthly with the Councillors in relation to the project tracker and diary extract.

10.10 To discuss the update of the Parish Council website in terms of aesthetics and content

It was agreed that a subcommittee group would be formed to initiate the update and discuss possible changes, with initial considerations being made to adding events to the website and also a survey to Parishioners for their feedback.

The subcommittee group formation will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

10.11 To discuss and finalise the transition of email accounts for HCPC to gov.uk email addresses

Angela Mclean confirmed that a £100.00 + VAT grant was secured from the Cabinet Office for the initial set up of official gov.uk email addresses for all Councillors and the Parish Clerk.

The first year cost would include the gov.uk domain for £60.00 + VAT per annum and a one off set up cost of £50.00 + VAT, less the offset of the grant obtained would make the first year cost £10.00 + VAT, £12.00 Gross.

After the initial first year the annual fee would increase to £165.00 + VAT for this service.

It was agreed for Angela Mclean to follow this up and initiate the transition with Netwise to include seven Councillors and the Parish Clerk email account.

Council agreed the format to adopt of the following example:

councillorcrider@hoptonandcotonparishcouncil.gov.uk

10.12 To review and ratify the Risk Assessment for 2024 for HCPC

The Risk Assessment for 2024 for HCPC was reviewed and ratified by Council and approved for publication.

10.13 To review and ratify the Asset Register for HCPC

The Asset Register for HCPC was reviewed and ratified by Council and approved for publication.

10.14 To discuss Parish Boards refurbishment programme and receive an update on this area and access to all Parish Boards

Following on from the last meeting the Parish Boards refurbishment is underway and is being carried out by M Ali, the Caretaker; he is awaiting an improvement in the weather to complete this task.

- 10.15 To receive an update from the CIO working party group in relation to the Tenancy at Will and ongoing work**
Cllr J Watkins spoke to provide an update on the CIO working party group, in which she confirmed that the Asma of Wellers Hedley had suggested issuing a lease rather than a Tenancy at Will to the CIO.
- It was confirmed that the CIO had appointed a solicitor in the first instance and any costs had agreed to be shared with the CIO verbally by Mr Ramster, in which this would require to be voted on by the CIO to confirm this.
- Cllr M Notman confirmed that a planned meeting would take place with Alan Toplis of Toplis Associations in which A Mclean has invited to be present.
- Further updates are to be provided to A Mclean for distribution to all Cllrs.
- 10.16 To assign a Councillor contact to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council for HS2**
All Cllrs were asked to undertake the role of liaison, in which Cllr P Cunningham agreed to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council for HS2.
- 10.17 To assign a Councillor contact to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council for MOD4**
All Cllrs were asked to undertake the role of liaison, in which Cllr J Watkins agreed to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council for HS2.
- 10.18 To receive an update from the meeting with SAGE Housing and HCPC on behalf of Redrow residents on 1st March 2024**
Cllr J Watkins spoke to confirm that her drafted minutes had been sent to SAGE for approval before distribution to Council. She reported a successful meeting with senior members of management of SAGE Housing in attendance.
- She reported that SAGE Housing own the apartment blocks and some semi detached houses in Redrow, with the management company failing them. The residents in attendance voiced concerns in relation to anti-social behaviour.
- SAGE Housing confirmed that they have funding that could be used for the Parish to include summer clubs matched funding, activities and other projects.
- Cllr J Watkins to follow this up and report back to Council.
- A Mclean to distribute the minutes to all Cllrs.
- 10.19 To receive an update from the SERCO meeting held 23rd February 2024 and assign a Councillor contact to undertake the role of liaison on behalf of the Parish Council**
Cllr J Watkins spoke to confirm that this meeting had been postponed and a further update to follow when the next proposed meeting would be scheduled for.
- 10.20 To receive an update from the St Mary's Gate working party group and a proposal to provide additional play equipment for the recreation area at St Mary's Gate**
Cllr S Mead spoke to confirm that the minutes have been presented to the Parish Clerk from Cllr S Spennwyn to update the Council on the meeting held to supply four benches to the area in recyclable plastic. Cllr S Mead also confirmed that within the working party group the some residents had been onboarded to join.
- The play equipment installation was discussed as an ongoing issue, as quotes obtained to install young children swings are very expensive.
- A Mclean to distribute the minutes to all Cllrs.
- 10.21 To receive an update from the working party group for the review and updating of the Council policies**
A Mclean spoke to confirm that the meeting is scheduled for 21st March 2024 in order to start work on the review and updating of the Council Policies, in which workings will be presented at the next meeting.
- 10.22 (Formally) 10.8) To review the SPCA and Toplis Associates response to the CIO vote taken on 15th November 2023 and 7th February 2024**
A Mclean spoke to read the update received from SPCA and Toplis Associates in response to the vote take on 15th November 2023 and 7th February 2024, see addendum 4.

It was agreed that more information would be cited in relation to the above CIO vote taken and A Mclean to report to Council.

10.23 To receive an update on the current and proposed contract for the Footballers for the use of the Football Pitches in Hopton

A Mclean confirmed that a draft contract agreement has been prepared Football Club's in which the usage and charge is still be considered.

It was agreed for this item to be discussed and reviewed at the next meeting.

10.24 To discuss the repair of a bench located Wilmore Hill Lane

The bench repair was discussed in which it was agreed to add this item onto the agenda for the next meeting for replacement rather than repair due to the nature of the damage.

Cllr P Cunningham also spoke to confirm that the Garden Guild would like to request a £300.00 donation of cost towards the "Welcome to Hopton" signs in which need replacing. This item would be considered for the next meeting.

10.25 To agree and confirm GDPR training to be undertaken by SCC for the Council

A Mclean spoke to confirm that SCC offer quarterly online training sessions as part of the SCC DPO package for two delegates with the next online session being held on 21st March 2024 in relation to Data Protection.

Cllr J Watkins agreed to attend as a representative of the Council.

10.26 To follow up on the planned Defibrillator training event to be held on 27th March 2024 and proposed Defibrillator for Hopton

It was agreed to display posters on all Parish Boards to advertise the event to the community in addition to the Facebook updates.

A Mclean will email the poster to the displayed to the relevant Cllrs and Caretaker.

The defibrillator for Hopton was discussed, as Cllr M Notman provided an update from Janet Stubbs that the Church of England agrees in principle to the application from the Lichfield Faculty to add the defibrillator to the Church, however, significant detail is required to complete this project and it could take six months to approve the installation.

The location of the Village Hall was discussed as a secondary location, as the building will remain the property of HCPC, in which the asset would added to the HCPC asset register. It was also discussed that the CIO had obtained funding for this expenditure and this had been earmarked.

10.27 To consider any planning matters

There were no planning matters due for consideration at this time.

10.28 Financial Matters

10.28.1 To discuss in detail the AGAR External Audit Findings for the Financial Year 2022-2023

A Mclean discussed the findings presented from Mazars in relation to the External Audit for the Financial Year 2022-23 to include:

- **30 Days Notice for Electors;** to ensure that this period would be correct to include the relevant number of required days. It was discussed and agreed to ensure that this is correct.
- **Monitoring of Budget;** to ensure that this is reviewed regularly against the actual expenditure throughout the financial year, atleast quarterly. It was discussed and agreed to ensure that this is implemented.
- **Banking Arrangement;** the current banking system shows significant weaknesses in the control of payment authorisation. It was discussed and agreed that the bank account is to be switched to Unity Trust Bank as Natwest are unable to change the payment permissions.
- **Risk Assessment;** the current Risk Assessment for HCPC has not been updated. A Mclean confirmed that this document has been amended, and presented to Council for final ratification and publication.

- **Reserves;** the reserves held in comparison to the Precept were deemed as high, in which it was agreed that funds should be earmarked to projects rather than general reserves.

10.28.2 To discuss in detail the AGAR Internal Audit Findings for the Financial Year 2022-2023

A Mclean discussed the findings presented from Toplis Associates in relation to the Internal Audit for the Financial Year 2022-23 to include:

- **Council Policies ;** the current Risk Assessment, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders for HCPC have not been updated. A Mclean confirmed that the Risk Assessment document has been amended, and presented to Council for final ratification and publication and the working party group will review the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders on 21st March 2024 for presenting at the next public meeting.
- **Reserves;** the reserves held in comparison to the Precept were deemed as high, in which it was agreed that funds should be earmarked to projects rather than general reserves, in which ear marked funds are required to be agreed by full Council.
- **Appointment of Internal Auditors;** a requirement for HCPC to ensure that formal appointment of the Internal Auditors is made within each year. A Mclean confirmed that this was carried out and detailed on the meeting minutes for the financial year 2023-24.

10.28.3 To consider the schedule of payments

The schedule of payments report, together with the supporting documents were reviewed and approved, please refer to the addendum 1.

10.28.4 To provide an update on the change of Parish Council banking provider for the Current Account and Reserve Account from Natwest Bank to Unity Trust Bank and add a further Councillor to the banking system

A Mclean provided an update on the change of Parish Council banking provider from Natwest and confirmed that a switch was not possible as the Natwest Bank and Unity Trust Bank are not set up with the same mailing address and same signatories.

A Mclean to agree a transfer of funds manually with Cllr S Spennewyn into the Unity Trust Bank and a mutually agreed date.

Cllr J Watkins agreed to be added to the banking system, in which A Mclean will follow up with the required paperwork in relation to this.

10.28.5 To discuss and approve the final budget and precept for the financial year 2024-25 and for Council to vote on the completion and approval of this and allocation of funds to areas with the Parish

The budget for 2024-25 as worked upon in the working party meeting on 7th March 2024 was agreed and voted on for approval for the forthcoming financial year 2024-25.

10.28.6 To receive an update of bank reconciliation to 29th February 2024

A Mclean presented the updated bank reconciliation to 29th February 2024, please refer to the addendum 2.

10.29 To review the resignation of the caretaker and discuss a replacement employee

Further to the resignation of M Ali, Caretaker, in which will the notice period of four weeks will commence following on signature from the CIO for the Tenancy at Will document, it was discussed for a replacement employee to be considered baring in mind the current employee is under a contract of one hour per week.

It was discussed that this item would be followed up.

Cllr C Rider spoke to deliver her resignation as Councillor and Vice Chair, to the Council and members of the public present, see addendum 3.

10.30 To discuss the continued peer support for the Parish Clerk from Kim Squires of Toplis Associates

The peer support for the Parish Clerk from Kim Squires of Toplis Associates was discussed and agreed by Council to continue for the foreseeable during the Parish Clerk's training within the role.

10.31 To confirm the date of the next planned public meeting

The next planned meeting was confirmed as this would be a public open meeting to be held on Wednesday 10th April 2024 at Hopton Village Hall to commence at 7:00pm.

The Parish Council meeting was closed.

END

Signed: **Dated:**
Chairman

**Angela Mclean
Parish Clerk
March 2024**

Addendum 1

Date	Beneficiary	Detail	Amount
01.03.2024	HMRC	PAYE- Qtr to 31.03.2024	£363.60
21.02.2024	Imperative Training Limited	Defibrillator Training Event 27.03.2024	£390.00
12.05.2023	Signs 2000 Limited t/a Sturgess and Moore	Parish Notice Board- Redrow	£1,206.00
10.02.2024	SLCC	CILCA Qualification Fee	£450.00
10.02.2024	SLCC	ILCA to CILCA Course	£144.00
19.02.2024	Toplis Associates Limited	Consultancy Services 28.02.2023 to 16.10.2023	£1,306.51
01.03.2024	CIO	Woodturners Village Hall Hire- T Sandford	£480.00
07.03.2024	A Mclean- Parish Clerk	Mileage Log to March 2024	£114.66
28.03.2024	Parish Clerk and Caretake Salary	Salary- March 2024	£497.70

**HOPTON AND COTON PARISH COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT
FEBRUARY 2024**

Date	Receipts Current Account				
	None		0.00		
	Total Current Account Receipts				0.00
	Receipts Reserves Account				
29.02.24	Interest		29.43		
	Total Reserves Account Receipts				29.43
	Total Receipts				0.00
	Payments	Payment type	Net	Gross inc VAT	VAT
01.02.24	HMRC- PAYE Qtr to 31.12.23	Online	349.00	349.00	0.00
26.02.24	Angela Mclean- Salary	Online	437.90	437.90	0.00
26.02.24	Mike Ali- Salary	Online	60.00	60.00	0.00
17.02.24	Sky Mobile- Parish Clerk Phone	Online	5.83	7.00	1.17
		Online			
	Total Payments		852.73	853.90	1.17
Total funds					
	Current a/c b/fwd		65,379.79		
	Business reserve a/c b/fwd		25,548.16		
	Add current a/c receipts this month		0.00		
	Add business reserve a/c receipts this month		29.43		
	Less: payments this month		853.90		
	Funds in current a/c after payments			64,525.89	
	Funds in reserve a/c after interest			25,577.59	
	Total Funds available			90,103.48	
Earmarked funds					
	HVH Woodturners		480.00		
	General Reserve		89,623.48		
				90,103.48	
Bank reconcilliation					
	Current a/c B/F			65,379.79	
	Add current a/c receipts this month			0.00	
	Less payments			853.90	
	Adjusted a/c			64,525.89	
	Bank statement			65,379.79	

Councillor Claire Rider
Hopton and Coton Parish Councillor

Dear Clerk, Chair, Councillors and Parishioners,

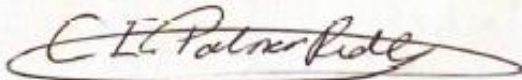
It is with regret that I write to inform you all that I Claire Rider am from this point onwards declaring today (13th March 2024) during our open public meeting that I give my notice and resignation to my role as a Hopton and Coton Parish councillor.

In becoming a councillor I had hoped to be part of a team of councillors who would work together with mutual aims striving to expand quality of life within our whole parish, supporting our wider parish in its ever developing perimeters to become acquainted with each other, mutually working for the betterment of everyone in our community.

However, I do not see that this council historically, currently or in the near future has the capacity to work with mutual respect. Whether talking about grass cutting in the community, the instillation of defibs or the never ending debate of working in partnership with the CIO, there continues to be historical conflict that creates barriers to communication and projects for our parishioners. Irrespective of individuals or groups of councillors working to resolve ongoing issues, proceedings are continually hindered.

Yes many of us are new to the roles as parish councillors, all of us at times needing to become more familiar with code of conducts, parish fundamentals, rules of play and laws, yet there seems little support or acknowledgement that we are all still learning and mistakes are made. Instead innocent errors or developing knowledge is used to control the narrative and hinder progress, with votes that each and every councillor has agreed to take part in then being questioned or discussed without transparency.

Working together does not always seem to be a priority, time and money, money from our parishioners own pockets, is precious, as is our own time. As continuous stalling, unhealthy and unproductive debates continue nothing gets done. My own morals do not align with current working practice and I can no longer be associated to this practice or a working councillor.



Addendum 4

SPCA Response

I refer you to the point you have raised regarding the HCPC vote against the lease to the CIO, I advise that this cannot be rescinded as stated in the local government Act 1972 unless 6 months has elapsed or, it is called in for which would require at least 6 councillors to sign a notice with clear grounds as to why the resolution should be revisited.

Cllr C.P. Cunningham at the time of seeking to have this topic put back on the HCPC agenda clearly had a conflict of interest as he hadn't resigned his position until the day before the meeting of 07/02/24, a further point is, when did you receive his resignation in writing. If it was done verbally, it is not acceptable as the individual could rescind it in order to circumvent the situation. In order for it be formally accepted by council it must be received in writing .

Notwithstanding that you have had verbal confirmation of his resignation from both parties, I would point out the correct formal process above should have been followed therefore as this has not been adhered to that decision is either null and void, or inform the Councillor in question that due to the failure to disclose a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/Pecuniary Interest within the LGA 1972 Act time frame being 28 days that councillor could be reported to the Monitoring Officer for breaching code of conduct.

Toplis Associates Response

Transparency in Decision Making

1) Item 07.7 on the agenda for the meeting of 15 November 2023 reads:

07.7 To receive a further update with regard to the CIO

The minutes of that item show that 2 proposals were submitted during this update. Proper practice is that any proposals must be included in the agenda. As the item was intended to be an update, any subsequent proposals should have been deferred to the following meeting and the vote taken at the meeting 15/11/23 was therefore invalid. Further, one member failed to declare an interest in this item which would also would invalidate this vote. It is noted that this has led to considerable conflict within the Council.

The addition of the proposals could be interpreted as an attempt to undermine the democratic process, as the Council were given insufficient information with which to make an informed decision.

Further, it could be considered that there was an element of predetermination in the presentation of the material to ensure the outcome of the vote.

It is noted that at a subsequent meeting (7th February 2024) the vote was reconsidered and overturned. As the initial resolution was invalid, this was unnecessary.

However your council must understand that the vote to overturn the "invalid" motion of the 15th November 2023 taken on the 7th February 2024 was again invalid. A motion passed by the council cannot be overturned unless 6 months has elapsed or, it is called in for which would require at least 6 councillors to sign a notice with clear grounds as to why the resolution should be revisited.

We note that Cllr C.P. Cunningham at the time of seeking to have this topic put back on the HCPC agenda clearly had a conflict of interest as he hadn't resigned his position until you were notified by email on the day before the meeting of 7th February 2024.

Notwithstanding that you have had confirmation of his resignation from both parties, we would point out the correct formal process above should have been followed. Therefore,

as this has not been adhered to the decision taken was also null and void. You should inform the Councillor in question that due to the failure to disclose a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/Pecuniary Interest within the LGA 1972 Act time frame (being 28 days) that councillor could be reported to the Monitoring Officer for breaching code of conduct

It is clear that throughout the period from the start of the fiscal year to the eve of the meeting on the 15th November 2023 your council had every intention of seeking to come to an agreement to award tenancy and a working lease (subject to proper agreement) to the HVH CIO. As the two votes taken on the 15th November 2023 and 7th February 2024 are both null and void your council is effectively still pursuing its original intention.

2) Certain non-confidential items on the agenda of 15th November 2023 were held in closed session. This, again, could be seen as detrimental to the democratic process. Approval of the bank reconciliation statement should precede the authorisation of payments, otherwise councillors cannot satisfy themselves that there are sufficient funds to meet payments that they are authorising.