

HALTON WITH AUGHTON

MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Wednesday 8th May 2024 7:15pm at The Centre @ Halton

Chair: C Slinger
Present: N Turner, A Lamb, J Sewell, C Buntin, D Rigby, plus 4 other members of the public
Minutes: L Mills

1. Welcome from the Chair

2. Confirmation of the minutes of meeting held on 10th May 2023

It was resolved: that the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish held on 10th May 2023 be accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Annual Report of the Parish Council by the Chair

2023 saw the coronation of King Charles and the village celebrated by planting trees and holding a Big Help Out Day in May with a litter pick of the village followed by a picnic lunch at the centre which was a huge success thanks to the Centre staff and Sam Pritchard and her volunteers who do such wonderful job in keeping our village clean and tidy. The Big Thankyou event held in March was also a huge success with the creators and recipients coming together for the Cards fighting loneliness campaign. Thanks to Sam for her dedication and commitment. And also, not forgetting the award for Highly Commended Coronation Community 2023.

The Centre suffered a severe financial blow with the loss of its major hirer. Maureen Richardson, Centre Manager for several years retired in December, and we thank her for all her hard work and dedication. The staff have rallied round and with some new users and the upgrading of the solar panels with the help of the Parish council and Halton Lune trust have meant that the financial losses have been minimised. Sincere thanks to all the staff and volunteers who make the centre a huge asset to the village.

The Halton Gardening group deserve a huge vote of thanks for all the work they carry out in the parish. In May of 2023 were awarded the Kings Award for Voluntary service which was well deserved. They continue to maintain and improve various areas of the parish for which we are eternally grateful.

Anti-social behaviour was a problem on the allotments in March and again in October. Discussions and ideas on how to address this problem are ongoing.

Section 106 money of £16,000 was received from Lancaster City Council for use on pitch improvements which is ongoing and finally we have received planning permission to erect a fence along the Low Road playing field hedge to stop balls rolling into the road.

A sealed bid Tender was submitted for the purchase of Town End farm field which came up for auction in April was unsuccessful. However, remain hopeful that the parish can acquire this land.

Significant repairs have been carried out to boardwalk and replenishing safety chippings on the play area and work to seek funding to upgrade play areas in the parish will commence in 2024-25.

Mr Curwood retired after many years voluntarily maintaining and repairing benches in the parish. Thanks for all he has done and wish him a long and happy retirement.

We welcomed new District Councillors James Sommerville and Sarah McGowan.

Local elections in May 2023 were uncontested so all current councillors re-elected. Darren Rigby was co-opted in February 2024 and the resignation of Joe McAleer in March leaves a vacancy on the Parish Council.

Highway Matters

Resident complained of speeding from motorbikes and cars on High Road following the new speed limit on the A683. Traffic on High Road causing major issues with several cars suffering damage. Traffic calming measures were finally installed on Church Brow but seem to have had little effect.

Planning

December saw an application for 90 dwellings on land off Low Road which the council has objected to.

Neighbourhood Plan.

A grant from Groundwork UK meant work restarting on the Neighbourhood Plan and with the help of Kirkwells Planning Consultants, Charles Ainger, Parish Councillors, and the massive input from our Clerk Luke Mills the draft Plan has now just been out to Informal Consultation it is hoped that the Plan will be adopted by City Council by the end of 2024. This has taken a long, long time and much work has gone into this document so a huge vote of thanks to all who have been involved over the years.

I wish to thank all my fellow councillors for their support over the last 12 months and in particular our Clerk Luke Mills for his commitment and dedication.

4. Reports from local organisations:

a. Halton Community Association

I am delighted to be able to report that some of the major challenges faced at the beginning of this financial year have been successfully overcome.

A very positive response from Sam Pritchard and John Elliot to our appeal at the AGM for more support on the HCA committee has made a great difference to how HCA functions.

The annual accounts presented at the AGM last year showed a loss of approximately £17000; there was clearly a need to restructure and reduce expenditure.

An opportunity to start this process arose last July. It was discovered that one of our staff members was not meeting the high standards of personal and food hygiene standards that we usually achieve and expect at HCA. That staff member did not have their contract renewed so wage costs were reduced.

Further challenges to the financial stability of HCA occurred in August when Preschool, our major source of income, announced that they would not be returning to the Centre in September.

Another highly significant change to the running of HCA was necessary when our manager, Maureen Richardson, announced she would be retiring, planning to leave on 22nd December 2023. Maureen's contribution to HCA over many years has been invaluable and greatly appreciated, but this change also gave us the opportunity to review how HCA was managed.

An expanded group of volunteers for groups such as Soup and a Song and Luncheon Club were recruited, and they helped staff to help coordinate sessions. This mechanism of running sessions is currently being developed and expanded.

Partly due to the absence of preschool, it was possible for other community groups to start using The Centre. Carol Holman has excellently facilitated activities such as Hartbeeps, a new dog group, Queer By Gum football, Art classes, a Jazz band plus many more. The Christmas Fayre on 25th November and the New Year's Eve Ceilidh were both sell out successes.

In January it was decided to appoint Go Green Solar Group to start work as soon as possible to modernise and improve our use of renewable energy. The work was completed in April this year.

Naomi Turner has now become our Centre Coordinator and has been very successful in the new role. She has also completed a Mental Health First Aid Course adding to the service we can provide to the community.

Special thanks must also go to Carol Slinger and especially Alan Meikle for their advice and management of HCA finances during a year of challenges. With the help of superb staff and volunteers, HCA continues to thrive and can sustainably continue to serve the community.

b. Halton Gardening Group

We would like to express our appreciation of all the support you have given us over the years:

- We started in 2012 with no funds. You kindly gave us a £250 donation for our 1st Garden Safari in 2014. We are covered by your insurance.
- You let us use your land and make alterations to it eg the HCA terrace and the top of the Ginnet.
- You allowed us to buy planters and put them round the village and put up our notices. We used the planters in the young children's playground in conjunction with the Playgroup and now will only use one for herbs. I understand the other 2 will go and be replaced by more playthings for the children.
- You have allowed us to use the playing field for our plant sales to provide money for our projects within the village and to support our group.
- You have responded to our pleas for help eg. cutting trees back in the Burial Ground, weedkilling, improving the grass in the Memorial Garden, strimming the football bank to facilitate the growing of wild flowers, putting in steps to provide a clear route down from the playground down to the field.
- You have reimbursed us for bulbs for the War Memorial and paid for a green bin in the Memorial Garden and please could we have a 2nd one! It is not practical to have a compost heap.
- We have a clear Memorandum of Understanding with you which has clarified our respective roles. This has significantly contributed to our getting the King's Award for Voluntary Service. It says: The Parish Council will:
 - Inform the insurers that volunteers are working on behalf of the Parish Council and verify whether there are any conditions associated with volunteer work.
 - Provide physical support via the grounds staff.
 - Consider requests for the reimbursement of cost; ideally any likely costs should be approved by the Parish Council beforehand. The Parish Clerk should be contacted in the first instance to agree procedure.
 - Compile a set of Risk Assessments covering locations and general tasks in conjunction with HGG.

TOGETHER WE'VE MADE HALTON A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE. THANK YOU

Action: Clerk to send PC risk assessment to HGG

c. Halton Lune Hydro

The hydro continues to serve its purpose of providing green electricity to the local community and to allocate grants for worthy causes in and around the Parish of Halton with Aughton, via the Halton Lune Trust.

Surplus funds do however vary quite considerably, as power generation is dependent of river flow that ranges from very high to very low, and the income is dependent on the revenue from a fairly steady Feed In Tarrif, plus a quite variable electricity selling price for export into the National Grid.

A typical £12,000 to £15,000 a year donated to the trust went up to £105,000 for 2023 as a result of an unusually high electricity price - that was certainly not welcome to householders - and is now back down again.

All in all, it's a massive joint effort with the Trust averaging out our donations and the operators and maintainers of the Hydro plant and machinery.

A "Duty Officer" calls by each day to take a set of readings and reports anything untoward, with a view to other members of the team coming along to assist. It certainly a nice place to be in reasonable weather and training is provided, should anybody wish to try out the Duty Officer role.

d. Halton Lune Trust

Following a very successful year for Halton Hydro the Trust received a total of £105,000 of which £41,000 was awarded to 9 recipients in line with the trusts criteria.

e. Burton & Rigby Educational Foundation

There was a total number of 28 applications for assistance in September 2023 of which 20 were from Halton and 8 were from Aughton. The Trustees considered all applications carefully and opted to distribute £100 to applicants from Halton and £150 to applicants from Aughton. In the exercise of their discretion the Trustees awarded £200 to several applicants where there was evidence of particular need.

The Trustees also granted £750 to St Wilfrid's School.

f. Halton WI

Hearts of Halton WI meet at The Centre in Halton at 7:15pm on the 3rd Wednesday in the month. All ladies over 18 years old are very welcome a couple of taster meetings are free to attend.

This year we have had talks about the PDSA and Chocolate – cocoa beans farming in Ghana. Also, one of our members shared her memories of a trip to India staying on a boat touring the Ganges. Our president hosted a quiz and pizza night. We have taken part in the Lancashire WI federation quiz and attended the County meeting in Lytham, where we were entertained and educated by WI members- an author, a poet who helped maintain spirits during lockdown and a lady who climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. Not forgetting Lancashire's Lord Lieutenant. We also had a tour around Standfast and Barracks – The designer fabric factory, a great insight into what they do.

What do we have planned so far for the future:-

- May 8th Theatre trip
- May 15th Speaker – The prison service
- Axe throwing evening June Speaker Derian house June
- 22nd Ladies night – social with wine tasting
- July 17th Speaker – Women in business
- August 21st Outing to Leeds Armoury
- September 18th Speaker October 16th AGM Cheese and wine social
- November 20th Cookery class
- December 18th Party time with live entertainer and hotpot supper
- ... also the numerous Lancashire federation crafts, tours and social events.

The WI is the largest women's voluntary organisation in the world and Hearts of Halton celebrates over 70 years of Fun, friendship and education.

5. Matters of interest raised by electors

Halton Lune Hydro have noticed an increase in blue-green algae. They think this is due to a combination of raw sewage and field run-off since it does not necessarily coincide with heavy rainfall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19:40. Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date