

**Minutes for the Meeting of
LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL
Held on Monday 6th of February 2023 at 7pm
At The Latchen Room, Longhope**

Present:

Parish Councillors – *Gary Nicholas (Chair), Richard Gough, Dave East, Vicky Brobyn, Jackie Barker, Geoff Bick*

Also Present: *9 Members of the Public*

1. Welcome from Chair of Council (including Safety Evacuation Notice)

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Council Members Cllr Lee Haines and Cllr Rob Seabrook.

Apologies also received from County Councillor Philip Robinson

District Councillors Brian Robinson and Brian Jones not in attendance, no apologies received.

3. Public Forum

A member of the public raised concern over the Village litter bins frequently being filled, often with bulky items other than general litter. The Chairman advised that the Council could review the need for additional monitoring, or a change to the emptying schedule. Cllr Barker advised that she is happy to be contacted with any reports of such issues.

A member of the public advised that a meeting, with representatives from the National Flood Action Forum, was being arranged. They hoped to be able to confirm in due course that the meeting will take place at the Latchen Rooms on the 23rd of February. Further information will be forwarded to the Council, with Members being invited to attend. A letter was received by a Council Member, shortly before the meeting, from a resident expressing their concern over the ongoing damage being caused by vehicles to the grass verges and ditches in the village. This issue will be raised with GCC Highways, and National Highways as it is felt the issue is being exacerbated by the increase in traffic caused by the A40 road closure/diversion.

4. To note the Resignation of the Councils Clerk/RFO

It was noted that the Councils Clerk, April Seabrook, had left employment with Longhope Parish Council at the end of December 2022, with immediate effect. Cllr Nicholas has ensured any essential communications were circulated to Council Members in the meantime, as well as issuing the agenda, with summons, for this meeting.

5. Verbal report from County Councillor Philip Robinson, if in attendance *Not in attendance*

6. Verbal report from District Councillors Jones and Brian Robinson, if in attendance *Not in attendance*

7. Declaration of interest in any agenda items *None*

8. To receive requests for Dispensations

None

9. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of Longhope Parish Council held on 5th of December 2022

It was resolved to accept the draft minutes, as circulated, of the meeting held on 5th December 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting, they were duly signed by the Chairman.

10. To Consider Planning Applications Received:

- P0029/23/TCA - Crab Apple in hedge-line between 6 The Orchards' garage and Dambar Cottages parking - prune back crown by no more than 50% to bring crown height to just below level of garage, and thin out centre of crown by removing dead, damaged, diseased and crossing branches. Elder tree at rear of 6 The Orchards' garage - remove lower branches to raise crown to 3 m above ground level and reduce height to 4 metres. | 6 The Orchards Church Road Longhope Gloucestershire GL17 0PZ – **Council had no Objections, However, application had already been determined by LPA**
- P1535/22/FUL | Re-positioning of environmentally low impact construction pathways around the site. | Dick Whittington Farm Park Blakemore Park Little London Longhope Gloucestershire GL17 0PH **Object: Council echoes the concerns raised by Jeff Wheeler, GCC Public Rights of Way Officer. This property has a complex planning history with a seemingly questionable approach to planning regulations. Given that there is a well-documented outstanding issue, relating to a pathway diversion, The Council feels that these issues should be resolved prior to planning being granted for the construction of additional pathways across the site. However, should the LPA be minded to grant permission we would request that further information be provided by the applicant as to the reason for new pathways when existing, and required, diversions have not been implemented. At the very least, commencement of construction of new paths should be conditional on outstanding works being completed first, and signed off by the Public Rights of Way Officer.**

11. Council to receive update on its recent planning application (P0037/23/TCA) for tree works at Brookend, the allotments and rear of Latchen Rooms

*Cllr Nicholas advised the Council that approval for the tree works had, in fact, been received from the FOD DC's Tree Officer, today, 6th of February 2023. No objections had been raised, nor conditions imposed for the works. During the application consultation period, the Tree officer did ask whether replacement tree planting would occur. Cllr Nicholas advised that this would likely be the case, however the Council were keen to clear back/tidy the areas first, so that they could assess the space and develop a plan for replanting. However, an assurance was given that, overall, there would be no net loss of tree numbers across the sites. The Tree Officer accepted this and provided some guidance on possible replanting options for the Council to consider. Council agreed that the previously agreed tree works Contractor could now be contacted to proceed as planned. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

12. Readoption of the Councils 'Communications Policy'

*Council agreed to re-adopt the Councils current Policy as previously drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

13. Readoption of the Councils 'Expenses Policy'

Council Chairman: cllr.gary.nicholas@longhopeparishcouncil.org

*Council agreed to re-adopt the Councils current Policy as previously drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

14. Readoption of the Councils Equality and Diversity Policy

*Council agreed to re-adopt, with minor re-wording proposed by Cllr Nicholas, the Councils current Policy. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

15. Adoption of the Councils Disciplinary Procedure Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the draft Disciplinary Procedure Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

16. Adoption of the Councils Grievance Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the draft Grievance Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

17. Adoption of the Councils Health and Safety Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the draft Health and Safety Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

18. Adoption of the Councils Reporting at Meetings of the Council or its Committees Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the draft Reporting at Meetings of the Council, or its Committees Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

19. Adoption of the Councils Financial Reserves Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the draft Financial Reserves Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

20. Adoption of the Councils Training and Development Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the draft Training and Development Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

21. Council to consider amending the current 'Acceptance of Office' form used for new Council Members, so that, in the absence of a Clerk/ Proper officer, the Council Chairman is also duly authorised to witness such a declaration, with the 'Acceptance of Office' of Chairman being signed by any other Council Member (in the absence of a clerk/ proper officer).

*Council agreed to adopt the amended 'Acceptance of Office' form as drafted by Cllr Nicholas. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

22. Council to consider creating 'New Council Member' information packs

Council agreed to Cllr Nicholas' proposal for the creation of information packs for new, and existing Council members. Such packs would include all approved policies, copies of PC asset register, Parish and Conservation area maps, copies of 'The Good Councillors Guide' along with any other information that might be of use to a new Councillor.

*Council approved a budget of £100, to cover the cost of binders, printing and other associated stationary costs, as well as the purchase of guide books from GAPTC. Funds allocated from the 'General Admin' section of the Councils Budget. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

23. Council to review the need for an 'Annual Schedule' document, detailing all Clerk, Councillor and trustee responsibilities and tasks.

Cllr Nicholas advised that following several years of instability, caused by a high turnover of Councillors and Clerks, as well as a lack of overall governance framework, various issues have arisen where submission dates have been missed or the Council were unaware of key dates. As such, having liaised with Cllr Gough, Cllr Nicholas presented the Council with a draft Annual Schedule, broken down into a monthly list, which included a comprehensive list of key dates, and tasks that must be completed by Councillors, the Clerk, or the Council as a whole. The schedule includes items such as publication of notices and submissions relating to the Councils AGAR forms, asset register review, insurance renewal, along with all standard monthly, quarterly and Annual checks. It was explained that such a document should be kept under constant review by Council with items added/amended as and when needed, to ensure no tasks were overlooked in the future. A finalised draft will be submitted to the Council for formal submission in due course.

24. Council to consider approving expenditure on additional storage binders for use in organising the Parish Council Archives.

*Council agreed a budget of £75 for the purchase of ring binders and document wallets, for use in organising the Councils archives. Funds allocated from the 'General Admin' budget section. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

25. Transfer of Councils website and email from a .org to a '.gov.uk' domain.

*Council received information from Cllr Nicholas on the benefits of a .gov.uk domain being used for the Councils website and email. It was agreed that using a 'trusted' domain would help prevent future issues with emails being misidentified as spam, the Council would also be able to better ensure compliance with Data protection and Freedom of Information legislation through the use of a central email system (as opposed to Gmail). It was also felt that a .gov.uk domain would project a more professional image for the Council. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

26. Council to review the Allotments Tenancy Agreement, and determine the plot rental costs for 2023/24

*Whilst the Council remain committed to the Allotment site being non 'revenue' generating, i.e. cost neutral to the parish, having considered allotment expenditure over the past year, as well as the cost of forthcoming tree surgery and clearance works the Council felt that they had little option other than to increase rental costs to £20 per plot, per annum. It should be noted that this is the first price increase for a number of years. The Council also felt that this increase would allow them to budget for further site improvements, whilst still representing good value for money, based on the rate per plot. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

27. Council to consider arrangements for administering the 2022/23 Chairmans Grant Fund (budgeted for in lieu of the annual Chairmans allowance).

It was explained that, for the second year running, the Chairman had declined to draw down his annual allowance for personal payment. Instead, he wished for it to go to a good

cause/causes within the Parish. (2021/22's allowance went towards the upkeep of the cemetery at Longhope Church). It was made clear that this offer by the Chair was not obligatory, and future Chairmen may choose to claim their allowance. Council agreed that the grant scheme should be advertised via the Councils social media and noticeboards. The advert would invite individuals and organisations, within the parish of Longhope, to forward an application to the Chairman for a grant payment of up to £250, under the scheme. Eligibility would be broad and applications would be reviewed by the Chairman and other Councillors.

28. Council to receive report on the Church Road water trough from Cllr Gough

*Cllr Gough has surveyed and completed technical drawings of the Trough on Church Road. He has also taken a series of digital measurements which confirm the structure of the trough is no longer level, and there does appear to have been past movement. Whilst there does not appear to be active movement, Cllr Gough will continue to assess the Trough and take further measurements. Cllr Nicholas is awaiting a response from two local stonemasons, who have been asked to visit the trough and carry out an assessment and quote for whatever remedial works would be required. **Action:** Cllr Gough and Cllr Nicholas*

29. Council to receive update from Cllr Nicholas on the grant application made to the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association.

*Cllr Nicholas advised the Council that he had been successful in obtaining a £2000 grant, towards the costs of the play park refurbishment. A grant acceptance letter had been received from the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association, and had now been returned with the necessary documentation, to allow the funds to be released to the Council. Council will be updated further upon receipt of the funds. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas*

30. Council to receive update on the Play Park Refurbishment works.

Cllr Nicholas advised the Council that construction of the new play equipment, and installation of the associated safety matting, was almost complete. Unfortunately, release of the site has been prevented by the delivery of one part being delayed. Cllr Nicholas has been chasing Playdale for further information on an expected completion date, however little information has been forthcoming so far. Cllr Nicholas is awaiting a telephone call with an update and hopes to update the Council in due course.

31. Council to consider Play Park Fencing, Shelter and safety signage quotations.

Cllr Nicholas provided the Council with details of a quote, from a local contractor, for the installation of new timber fencing. Various options were discussed, in relation to fencing the playpark area, and whether fencing was required around the whole area, or just along the top side of the play park, adjacent to the entrance track from station lane. Concerns were raised over the potential risk of unleashed dogs fouling in the play area, if not fully enclosed. However, the general consensus was that fencing be installed along the top play park boundary, with the front being reviewed in due course, when funding would allow.

Having reviewed the timber pail option quoted for, the Council decided that metal railings may be a better, longer lasting, option, which would be less prone to damage through wear and tear and strimming etc. As such the options for metal railings would now be reviewed and presented to Council in due course.

A quote for play park signage, which is a legal requirement, was presented to Council. Purchase of 2 signs at a total ex vat cost of £228.00 was approved.

Cllr Gough updated the Council on a quote he had obtained for the shelter, which was significantly more than expected. Cllr Nicholas had also obtained similarly high quotes. Following discussion on the needs for the shelter, the Council agreed to defer this element of the works, and instead focus on completing the fencing works, which will likely prove to be more expensive than budgeted for, now that metal railings are being sought. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas and Cllr Gough

32. Council to consider quote for a 'Post installation Safety Inspection' of new equipment, along with a regular annual inspection of existing items.

Council accepted the quote of £375, from 'The Playground Inspection Company', for a full 'post-installation' safety inspection of the new playground equipment, along with a routine annual inspection of all other items. This inspection organisation has been used by the Council before and provided a comprehensively detailed report. Likely turnaround time for an inspection is approximately 5 days.

The scheduling of the inspection will be dependant on the issues, listed above, being resolved with Playdale. Should any undue delay be expected, the Council may consider fencing off the uncompleted item of equipment and arranging a separate inspection at a later date. Should this prove necessary, the Council would seek to recover the additional expense from Playdale. **Action:** Cllr Nicholas

33. Report on the installation of the AutoSpeedwatch ANPR Camera

Cllr Nicholas advised the Council that both (one grant funded by GCC and the other purchased by the Council) of the new ANPR Cameras had arrived, and Cllr Nicholas had installed them at the Locations previously agreed by Council (Top of the Latchen and on Church Road – just past the Church). The Cameras shall continue to be monitored for a period to allow for remote calibration by the supplier, and manual adjustments of the unit may be required to complete set-up. Council was also advised that data, of speeding vehicles, was being collected already, however the data could not be acted upon until appropriate ANPR signage is in place. Cllr Nicholas will update Council once the cameras are fully functional and all signage is in place.

34. Council to consider providing funding for tree works required upon May Hill Summit

Item deferred to next meeting.

35. Council to re-consider proposal from Cllr Brobyn with regards to holding a CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) Screening event.

Cllr Brobyn raised the issue of the Council holding a Cardiac Screening event in the village. A past event, held some years ago, in memory of a local resident, proved to be well supported and attended. Such an event would have a likely cost of between £7000 and £8500, depending on weekday/weekend scheduling of an event. The Latchen Room had been confirmed as a suitable venue for any such event. The full Council agreed on the benefits of such a cause, however it was felt that the cost was beyond what the Council could consider. Various options for fundraising were discussed. Along with the potential for working with other local groups and sports organisations, who might be able to fundraise in exchange for an allocation of screening slots. Whilst the Council were unable to commit to taking this proposal forward It was suggested that such an event might be organised via the Management Committee of the Longhope Recreation Ground Charity, if they were willing to take the project on. This would likely give additional flexibility whilst working with other groups to fundraise. **Action:** Cllr Brobyn

36. Receive Councillors Reports

Cllr Brobyn updated the Council on arrangements for PC grit bins, and the issues that had occurred with getting them refilled, following recent cold weather. Whilst it has become apparent that GCC will not, ordinarily, refill bins mid-season, an emergency supply of bagged grit had now been delivered. In future years the Council will need to order a significantly larger stock of bagged grit so that they can refill bins themselves, as required, across the Parish.

Cllr Barker had reported the potholes in the road surface at the Wend, GCC Highways confirmed that the work would be scheduled.

Cllr Bick has cleared overgrowth, weeds and brambles etc, from the Footpath leading to Hopes Hill. This task will be of considerable benefit to residents who had been struggling to safely use this section of footpath. Council gave their thanks. Cllr Bick also reported that he had cleared the bus stop at Little London.

Cllr East had liaised with the local PCSO, who was still hoping to schedule a visit with a community speed watch camera. However, such a visit may be dependant on finding four volunteer camera operators.

Cllr Nicholas updated the Council on his communications with GCC Highways about the damaged/missing speed roundels at the village entrances. Highways had wrongly advised that there were no issues, requiring intervention, with any of the markings. However, they will reassess the issue, following Cllr Nicholas' advising them that one set of Roundels weren't even replaced after resurfacing works.

Cllr Nicholas has been liaising with PKF-Littlejohn, External Auditors, regarding a discrepancy with the Councils 2021/22 AGAR form, which was outstanding from before the last Clerks departure in December. The AGAR should be finalised in the coming weeks. Cllr Nicholas had spoken with the internal auditor Liz Dowie, regarding the interim audit that the Council had previously agreed for her to conduct. Following the Clerks departure, the auditor recommended that the Council forgo the interim audit, and instead focus on putting everything in place ready for the end of year audit.

Cllr Nicholas has notified GCC Highways about the lack of tactile paving, on the dropped kerbs, at the entrance to Old Elm Rise, and asked that these be installed prior to any adoption of the road by GCC. Cllr Gough provided an extract of the site drawings, showing tactile paving should be in place.

Cllr Nicholas advised Council that the missing street signs at The Wend, and at the top of The Latchen, had now been installed, following several Councillors chasing FOD DC. Cllr Nicholas advised that, contrary to reports on social media, no application had been received by the FOD DC tree officer for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on trees at the rear of Old Elm Rise. Furthermore, the tree officer had advised Cllr Nicholas that a TPO is unlikely to be granted on any trees unduly prone to disease, ie. Elm or Ash.

Cllr Nicholas advised Council that he had been working on having documents uploaded to the PC website. Assorted Rec Charity documents and the PC'S Charity/Trustee Accounts for last few years now online, along with the Neighbourhood Development Plan documents. The first batches of historic Minutes shall be uploaded shortly. With Cllr Nicholas working to fill in any gaps ASAP. Cllr Nicholas has also compiled missing bank statements and invoices from PC Accounts, contacting suppliers and payees as appropriate to obtain replacement invoices for the period prior to September 2022. Now working on the 2021/22 financial year.

Cllr Nicholas has liaised with the Latchen Room Committee in relation to the village defibs, following a query raised at a recent Council meeting, over their insurance, management etc. Cllr Nicholas hopes to bring a full proposal to the next meeting of the Council. Cllr Nicholas has received a Grant Application from the May Hill Society, in association with the Councils pledged funds, to be used towards a traffic regulation for lowering the speed limit through May Hill. Once further information is received from the Society, the matter can be brought before the Council.

Cllr Nicholas had received confirmation from National Highways that the A40 should be reopened from 6am on the 24th of February. Two way traffic management shall remain in place until March 3rd, by which time all works should be completed and the road released. Cllr Nicholas, Cllr East and Cllr Brobyn to arrange a visit with a representative from the May Hill Society to discuss plans for the forthcoming Coronation of HM King Charles III.

37. Accounts/Finance

a) Council agreed the following payments and receipts:

Payments made since last meeting:

Payee	Details	Method	Amount	Power	Budget
D A East	RB & MS Charity - Party	BACS (05/12/2022)	£1043.76	LGA 1972 S137	Trustee Account Transfer
WaterPlus Ltd	Allotments Water Supply	BACS (06/12/2022)	£18.25	Small Holdings Allotments Act 1908 S23 - LGA 1972 s111	Estate Management
Glos Playing Fields Assoc'	Annual Membership	BACS (06/12/2022)	£50.00	LGA 1972 s111	Subscriptions
EE Limited	Clerks Mobile Telephone	BACS (15/12/2022)	£26.40	LG(FP)A 1963 S5	General Admin
Longhope Recreation Ground MC	Waste Disposal for Village Litter Bins	BACS (16/12/22)	£177.70	Litter Act 1983 S5	Estate Management
AM Groundcare	Grass cutting & bins	BACS (16/12/22)	£80.00	Litter Act 1983 S5	Estate Management
99 Web	Monthly website maintenance	BACS (28/12/22)	£30.00	LGA 1972 s142	Communications
April Seabrook	December Salary	BACS (30/12/22)	£434.63	LGA 1972 s112(2)	Staff Costs
Technix Rubber	Play Park Safety Matting	BACS (03/01/23)	£2263.50	LGA 1894 S8 (1)	Play Park
PATA UK	Payroll Processing Costs	BACS (09/01/23)	£28.85	LGA 1972 s112(2)	Staff Costs
BJ Unwin Forestry	May Hill Tree Survey	BACS (09/01/23)	£300.00	Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9 & 10	Estate Management
WaterPlus Ltd	Allotments Water Supply	BACS (09/01/23)	£16.40	Small Holdings Allotments Act 1908 S23 LGA 1972 s111	Estate Management

HMRC	PAYE - Payroll	BACS (09/01/23)	£332.80	LGA 1972 s112(2)	Staff Costs
EE Limited	Clerks Mobile Telephone	BACS (16/01/23)	£26.40	LG(FP)A 1963 S5	General Admin
AutoSpeedWatch Limited	ANPR Speed Camera	BACS (24/01/23)	£589.00	LGA 1972 s31	Projects
99 Web	Monthly website maintenance	BACS (26/01/23)	£30.00	LGA 1972 s142	Communications
Petty Cash	Land Registry Check	CASH	£6.00	LGA 1972 s111	General Admin
		TOTAL	£5453.69		

Payments to be agreed at meeting:

Payee	Details	Method	Amount	Power	Budget
Steve Webley	Investigation of Brook End Storm Drain	BACS	£300.00	Public Health Act 1936 S260	Estate Management
WaterPlus Ltd	Allotments Water Supply	BACS	£18.25	Small Holdings Allotments Act 1908 S23 LGA 1972 s111	Estate Management
AM Groundcare	Grass cutting & bins - December	BACS	£80.00	Litter Act 1983 S5	Estate Management
AM Groundcare	Grass cutting & bins – January	BACS	£80.00	Litter Act 1983 S5	Estate Management
		TOTAL	£478.25		

Receipts:

02/12/22 RB & MS Charity – LPC (Account transfer)	£1043.76
05/12/22 Haines & Beard – Play Park Donation	£2000.00
09/12/22 General Reserves Account - Interest	£6.60
09/12/22 Play Park Account - Interest	£0.47
09/01/23 General Reserves Account - Interest	£12.33
09/01/23 Play Park Account - Interest	£0.87
10/01/23 National Grid 2023 Wayleaves Payment	£109.94

- b) Council received the bank reconciliation for the period December 2022 up to the 31st of December 2023.
- c) Council were advised that the Chairman had deposited the full balance of the petty cash, £38.81, into the Councils Treasurers Account, on the 3rd February 2023.
- d) Council received the budget versus spend report up to the 31st of January 2023.

Council Chairman: cllr.gary.nicholas@longhopeparishcouncil.org

- e) Cllr Barker and Cllr Gough carried out a financial check of the Councils accounts for the period since the last meeting of the Council, ie. from 5th December 2022 to the accounts reconciliation date of 31st January 2023.

38. Public Forum

None

39. Motion to exclude the Public and Press

Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, it is resolved that as the business to be discussed is considered to be of a confidential nature, the public and press should leave the meeting during the discussion of the following item.

Closed Session

40. Staffing Issues

Council received confirmation that no applications, for the Clerks Vacancy, had been received, and the advertised closing date had now passed. The Council considered the increasing difficulty, in hiring a Clerk, that had been experienced during past recruitment attempts, along with the difficulties experienced by other Parish Councils nearby. Given the proximity to the financial year end, as well as the end of the current Council term, it was proposed that Cllr Nicholas could act as Clerk until after the elections, when a permanent decision could be made. It was noted that this would be voluntary, and Cllr Nicholas would receive no payment. It was felt that this would help provide the opportunity for the Council to rectify outstanding internal issues as raised in the last Audit report. Given the substantial savings, on Salary, that the Council would make, it was agreed that the Council would cover the cost of CilCA training for Cllr Nicholas. Cllr Nicholas agreed to take on the role, on the understanding that there would be increased transparency, for example multiple Councillors reviewing financial papers, and additional documentation being published on the Councils website. Council Agreed.

41. Extraordinary Meeting scheduled for the 13th of February at 7pm

Next Ordinary Meeting of the Council scheduled for Monday 6th of March 2023

42. There being no further business the meeting closed at 21:35

Signed:

Dated: