

**Approved Minutes for the Meeting of  
LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL  
Held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2023 at 7pm  
At The Latchen Room, Longhope**

**Present:** Parish Councillors – Cllr Gary Nicholas (Chair), Cllr Richard Gough, Cllr Dave East, Cllr Lee Haines, Cllr Brobyn, Cllr Jackie Barker and Cllr Geoff Bick

**Also Present:** 4 Members of the Public

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

**2. Apologies for absence**

*Apologies received from Council Member Cllr Rob Seabrook and County Councillor Philip Robinson.*

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

**3. Public Forum**

*A resident enquired, with relation to planning application P0027/23/DISCON, as to how the Council knows whether the applicant has, and will continue to, comply with all of the conditions imposed. It was explained by the Chair that decisions in such matters would be based on a review of the documentation supplied, in addition, the oversight of District planning and building enforcement would be relied upon to ensure the development had been carried out in the form prescribed by the planning consent. With regards to future compliance, this would not be something that LPC would oversee. However, it was explained that any resident, who is aware of any issues with local developments, should contact LPC and the matter would be escalated as required.*

**4. Verbal report from County Councillor Philip Robinson**

*None (Not in attendance – Apologies received)*

**5. Verbal report from District Councillors Jones and Brian Robinson**

*None (Not in attendance – No apologies received)*

**6. Declaration of interest in any agenda items**

*None*

**7. To receive requests for Dispensations**

*None*

**8. To approve the Minutes of the meeting, of Longhope Parish Council, held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2023.**

*It was resolved to accept, with a minor addition to the version circulated, the draft minutes of the meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 as an accurate record of that meeting, they were duly signed by the Chairman.*

## 9. To Consider Planning Applications Received:

- P0278/23/FUL - Erection of detached Passivhaus dwelling with detached garage. Demolition of existing detached dilapidated dwelling with integrated garage. Copperfields Yartleton Lane May Hill Longhope Gloucestershire GL17 0NR **Support:** *Having considered the application, as well as the overall condition of the existing structure, along with the already diverse range of building designs within the surrounding area, the council considered the application to be acceptable in its form and without any risk of intrusion or privacy issues for neighbouring properties. It was felt that the property is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area, and with non-permeable surfaces having a similar overall footprint, to the current dwelling, any water run-off or discharge has been considered within the design and is unlikely to be greater than that of the current dwelling. As such, the Council agreed that this application should be supported.*
- P0286/23/FUL - Erection of single storey rear extension. Lower Hope Church Road Longhope Gloucestershire GL17 0LG **Support:** *Having considered the application the Council agreed that the proposed structure would be relatively small, in comparison with the overall dwelling. The location of the structure is such that it is unlikely to have any negative impact upon neighbouring properties. As such, the Council was in agreement that the application should be supported.*
- P0027/23/DISCON - Discharge of Condition 4 (Odour Management Plan), Condition 7 (Service Management Plan), Condition 12 (Soft Landscaping Scheme), Condition 13 (Biodiversity Enhancement), Condition 16 (Land Stability Report) relating to planning permission P1225/22/FUL. Chessgrove Farm Chessgrove Lane Longhope Gloucestershire GL17 0QJ **Support:** *No additional comments.*
- P1249/22/FUL - A full application for the erection of a detached four bedroomed house to be occupied by the Manager / Operator of the adjacent public house known as The Yew Tree Inn. - Yew Tree Inn Monmouth Road Longhope Gloucestershire GL17 0QD **Support with Condition Attached:** *Having now considered the application, on several occasions, as well as the new drawings, some of the Councils past concerns have now been allayed. However, the Council remains concerned that a dwelling in this location would not ordinarily be supported. However, the Council is willing to offer its support for this application on the basis that a condition is attached that stipulates that the dwelling is to be occupied only by the manager/operator, and their immediate family, of the attached licensed Public House. The Condition should make clear that the use of the proposed dwelling is tied to the licensed premises and is not to be occupied by any third parties.*

## 10. Adoption of the Councillor Co-option Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the Lone Worker Guidance Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas.*

**Action:** Clerk

## 11. Adoption of the draft Dispensation Procedure & Request Document

*Council agreed to adopt the Dispensation Procedure & Request Document as drafted by Cllr Nicholas.* **Action:** Clerk

## 12. Adoption of the draft Data Retention & Disposal Policy

*Council agreed to adopt the Data Retention & Disposal Policy as drafted by Cllr Nicholas.* **Action:** Clerk

**13. Council to consider possible improvements to the land at the rear of the Latchen Room, including ecological improvements and fencing to the rear of the site**

*Following the recent estate maintenance works to the area at the rear of the Latchen Room and Brookend, it was agreed that these areas should now be kept in good order and not allowed to fall back into an unmanaged state, as had previously happened. It is felt that the land behind the Latchen Room could provide significant benefit to the village by becoming an area allocated for ecological enrichment. This could be achieved through the installation of bird/bat boxes, bug 'hotels', planting of wildflowers and fruit trees etc. Cllr East spoke passionately about the improvements that could be made to this area, and also suggested the installation of benches, which he indicated he and Cllr Barker could organise. Cllr East indicated he was happy to take the lead on this project, and the Council agreed for him to do so.*

*Comments were also raised about the issues caused by ramps being built on the area of land, whilst the Council are not against the jumps, in principle, they felt there was a potential hazard caused by large holes being dug (so that the excavated soil could be used to build ramps/jumps). Cllr East suggested that he could meet with some youths and parents, who he had received concerns from, and try to understand what they would like from the space. This information could be used by the Council to agree an overall plan for the area, possibly with a fenced off area for the youths to use.*

*It was also agreed that quotes would be obtained for a replacement fence along the back boundary of the site. This would hopefully minimise the risk of dogs running up and onto the A4136. Cllr Gough agreed to draft a site plan/map that could be used when discussing the area. **Action:** Clerk/ Cllr East/ Cllr Gough / Cllr Nicholas*

**14. Formation of a committee or working group to initiate a review of the Longhope Parish Plan, last updated in October 2011. (NOTE. This is not the Neighbourhood Development Plan)**

*Council agreed to form a working group to review the Longhope Parish Plan, Terms of Reference and membership of group shall be agreed at the Councils Annual Meeting. As the review process will likely require public consultation, perhaps by way of a Parish Survey, it was agreed that this may be linked to other upcoming items such as the renewal of the Longhope NDP etc. **Action:** Clerk*

**15. Council to consider arrangements for the renewal of the Longhope Emergency Plan.**

*Cllr Nicholas advised Council that the current emergency plan for Longhope was now likely to be out of date, by several years. Besides the need to keep the practical elements of the plan current, emergency contacts also needed to be kept up to date. This plan should be kept by the Council, and also filed with the FOD DC.*

*Cllr Nicholas has contacted the 'Emergency Planning Specialist' at FOD DC, for further info on the date the document was last reviewed, as well as requesting any relevant information on the scope of, and appropriate processes for, the renewal of the plan.*

*Council agreed to form a working group to draft a new emergency plan, membership of the group and any appropriate terms of reference will be agreed at the Councils annual meeting in May.*

*Council will be updated once information is received from FOD DC.*

***Action:** Clerk/Cllr Nicholas*

**16. Council to receive update on play park fencing quotations.**

*Cllr Brobyn felt that the whole play park area should be fenced off, not just the side bordering the entrance track to the site. It was also discussed whether a third side was*

*required to the fencing, adjacent to the tennis courts. Cllr Nicholas explained that the Recreation Ground Committee were working on getting this sorted, and had all materials sorted. The only issue was finding a contractor. Past quotes were substantial, and it looked unlikely that said contractor would consider using the materials already purchased. Cllr Brobyn suggested putting out an appeal poster, seeking assistance from those with experience of fitting chain link. It was agreed that Cllr Brobyn would take the lead on this. So far, no offers of assistance with the play park fencing had been forthcoming from, the previously contacted, local firms. Cllr Gough was to try contacting one of them again. It was suggested that costs for purchasing appropriate fencing be explored, perhaps with separate installation by a local firm.*

*Cllr Barker questioned whether the Recreation Ground Committee should be asked to pay the cost, as it was on the Recreation Ground. Cllr Nicholas explained that it had long since been agreed the play park area was a direct responsibility of the Council. Furthermore, the Committee has already generously committed to covering 50% of the Council's annual PWLB loan repayments.*

*Discussions were also had on what type of fencing should be installed. Cllr Nicholas briefly explained the safety regulations surrounding the specification of fencing. Give the possible costs, it may be useful for the Council to explore the, previously discussed, chain link and timber frame option further. **Action:** Cllr Gough/ Cllr Brobyn/ Cllr Nicholas*

**17. Council to receive update on arrangements for the forthcoming Coronation of HM King Charles III, and consider releasing the funds, allocated in the budget, to Longhope Recreation Ground Management Committee. Council to consider the requirement for any other commemorative items.**

Council received update on planned activities for the Coronation weekend, the activities being held at Longhope Recreation Ground are being organised by the Management Committee. The issue of a commemorative item for villagers was raised by Cllr Nicholas. Whilst the suggestion of a mug seemed inappropriate, given the issues that occurred with the distribution of the 2022 Jubilee mugs, the idea of a commemorative coronation coin was well received. Whilst the cost of a presentation case, approximately £1.50 extra per coin was felt to be unnecessary, it was agreed that the Council would purchase 1000 Coins, at approx. £1.65 per unit, in plastic wallets to be distributed to each household within the Parish. Should the household require additional coins these could be ordered, with details being provided in an accompanying letter. Given the proximity of the Coronation, and the production timeline of the Coins, it was noted that delivery may be after the event. However, the Coins could be advertised in advance. **Action:** Cllr Gary Nicholas

**18. Receive Councillors Reports**

*Cllr Brobyn, unexpectedly, had to leave the meeting at this point.*

*Cllr Bick advised that the resident at Hill Court will be clearing the frontage of the property. Cllr Bick advised that damaged drains at Hopes Hill and Church Road had been reported to County Highways.*

*Cllr Haines advised that the VAS Speed Camera had now been fixed and was awaiting reinstallation on Church Road.*

*Cllr East has followed up with the owners of Coglan House, in relation to the reported damage to a wall.*

*Cllr Nicholas provided the Council with a summary of a productive meeting he had in the Village with Cllr Philip Robinson and Andrew Middlecote of County Highways, where numerous, longstanding, issues were discussed.*

*These include the grass verges and ditches along Church Road, which Highways will look at and see what improvements/remedial works can be undertaken. The non-working VAS*

*Speed signs on Old Hill have now been passed to the street lighting team to follow up on and will hopefully be reactivated soon.*

*Following issues over winter with the Grit Bins and Salt supply, County Highways are working on a new policy, which will be in place before next autumn, along with some funding for new grit bins.*

*The poor state of pavements along Church Road was raised. With particular concern given to the gradient and camber of the pavements in certain areas. Highways asked that LPC provide a map of the key areas and they shall see what options may be available for improving accessibility.*

*Following a resident's request, it was asked whether a speed bump or similar traffic calming measure could be installed at the Slad, to slow traffic down. Unfortunately, Highways cannot consider this due to the speed limit and lack of street lighting.*

*The often-mentioned issue of speeding along the A4136 was discussed, whilst a lowering of the speed limit could be considered, this would require a Traffic Regulation Order and would come at a substantial cost. This matter would be explored further.*

*A request for an additional 'No HGV'S' sign at the bottom of Chessgrove Lane was requested.*

*The volume of HGV'S passing through the village was discussed. However, this issue would require enforcement by the police, as such this could be raised with the local PCSO. The damaged/missing Speed strips and Roundels were raised, and Highways have agreed to look at reinstating these. The A4136 side of the village would likely be prioritised, with the A40 works timeline depending on cost and the availability of funding.*

*The natural bottleneck created by the bridge over the brook, at The Pound, was raised and possible solutions were discussed. Highways will pass this to the relevant department for further consideration.*

*The damaged Culvert at Brookend was discussed, and following investigation by Cllr Nicholas, it would appear this 'lateral connection point' would fall within Highways responsibility. Highways believe this likely to be the case, and as such LPC will likely save several thousand pounds by not undertaking remedial works directly. Highways are to investigate, with the use of tracing dye, and shall provide an update in due course.*

*Highways confirmed that the footpath along the A40 is the responsibility of National Highways. A section of the A4136 footpath has not been cleared due to possible safety issues with an adjacent properties bank slipping. This is currently being investigated.*

*Highways confirmed that there is unlikely to be an issue with remedial works to the trough on Church Road, they've advised that LPC should liaise with the Roadworks Team who will be able to advise on any traffic management measures required,*

*Following historic problems with the storm drainage system within Longhope, particularly along Church Road, it was confirmed that there are little to no maps of the drain system.*

*Following representations made by Cllr Nicholas, Highways will look at carrying out a full survey of the drains along Church Road, with a view to determining their condition and capacity etc. Should funding be an issue, County Cllr Philip Robinson is willing to allocate some of his discretionary funding, to ensure that these much-needed works can be carried out. Cllr Nicholas will provide further updates on the above as the situations progress.*

## **19. Council to receive update on its new subscription to Scribe Accounting Software.**

*Cllr Nicholas advised Council that its new accounting software, from Scribe, had been activated, and its use would commence from the start of the 2023/24 financial year. It is intended that Scribe generated financial reports would be circulated from the next meeting onwards. The invoice for the setup and 2023/24 software fee had now been received and included on the payment approval list below.*

## **20. Council to consider quotations received for the following contracts**

### **a. Seasonal grass cutting of Parish Council owned land.**

**b. 2023/24 annual contract for emptying of Parish Council owned litter bins.**

*With only two quotes having been received, one of which had not been submitted in accordance with the published tender documents, the Council agreed to defer this item. It was agreed that an extraordinary meeting of the Council would take place at 18:30 on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, Venue – Longhope Recreation Ground Pavilion.*

**21. Update on correspondence from the external auditor, PKF Littlejohn, with regards to the Councils 2021/22 Annual Governance and Accountability Return.**

*Cllr Nicholas advised the Council that the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, had finally been able to sign off on the Councils AGAR Submission. This process was completed substantially later than it should have been, as a result of delays in the submission of the Documents (Caused by the departure of one previous Clerk) and a discrepancy in the explanations (provided by another past Clerk) given for variations between income/spending and asset value. Cllr Nicholas had been able to communicate with the external auditors and provide appropriate explanations for the variances. As such the 2021/22 AGAR has now been accepted. It was noted that the process for the 2022/23 audit and AGAR submission had already begun, and all being well should be completed well within the guidelines provided by the Auditors. Council was also advised that a late filing fee of £40 (plus VAT) had been incurred, this is in addition to the standard audit fee of £200 (plus VAT)*

**22. Publication of the 'Notice of Conclusion of Audit' for the 2021/22 financial year.**

*Council acknowledged that the Notice had been duly published on the Parish Council Noticeboards, as well as on the finance section of the Councils website.*

**23. Council to review 2023/24 Annual Budget and consider approving amended budget as submitted by Cllr Nicholas.**

*Council reviewed its Budget for the 2023/24 Financial Year (as approved in November 2022). Amendments were agreed, to include revised costings for items that had seen price increases and additions were also made for previously unaccounted for items such as elections costs. The budget remains balanced, without any cuts to planned spending, and as a result of savings elsewhere, such changes would have made no difference to the 2023/24 precept demand if made earlier. These revised figures shall be used as the starting budget figures for the scribe accounting system.*

**24. Council to consider allocating funds, from its reserves, to assist with the refurbishment/extension of the access road and Car Park at Longhope Recreation Ground.**

*This item was deferred, by the Chairman, to a later date. Additional research and costings required. **Action:** Clerk/ Cllr Nicholas*

**25. Council to consider grant application received under s137 of the Local Government Act 1972.**

*Council considered a grant application received from the FEN Magazine. £200 had been requested to assist with the publication of a bumper colour issue of the magazine, to help celebrate the Coronation of HM The King. A similar application was received, and approved, prior to HM The Queen Elizabeths Platinum Jubilee in 2022. Given the benefit of the publication, to local residents, the Council unanimously approved the grant application, and authorised payment forthwith. **Action:** Clerk*

## 26. Appointment of GAPTC as the Councils internal Auditor

The Council agreed to appoint GAPTC as its internal Auditor, ahead of preparations for the submission of its 2022/23 AGAR. **Action:** Clerk

## 27. Public Forum

None

## 28.To receive the accounts/finance reports

- Payment Schedule was approved by all Members present.

### Payments made since last meeting:

| Payee                                | Details                                     | Method            | Amount            | Power                                          | Budget         |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Playdale                             | Playground Refurbishment Balance            | BACS (09/03/2023) | £19,929.97        | LGA 1894 s9 (1) (I)                            | Play Park      |
| The Play Inspection CO               | Playground Safety Inspection                | BACS (09/03/2023) | £450.00           | LGA 1894 s9 (1) (I)                            | Play Park      |
| Cllr Gary Nicholas                   | Chairmans Allowance/ Grant Fund             | BACS (09/03/2023) | £250.00           | LA (Members Allowances) Regs 2003 SI 2003/1021 | Chairmans Fund |
| EE Limited                           | Clerks Mobile Telephone                     | BACS (15/03/2023) | £26.40            | LG(FP)A 1963 s5                                | General Admin  |
| 99 Web                               | Monthly website maintenance                 | BACS (27/03/2023) | £30.00            | LGA 1972 s142                                  | Communications |
| Cllr Gary Nicholas                   | Reimbursement for Purchase of Clerks Laptop | BACS (31/03/2023) | £289.99           | LG(FP)A 1963 s5                                | General Admin  |
| Fenland Leisure (Online Playgrounds) | Playground EN1176 Compliant Signage         | BACS (31/03/2023) | £291.60           | LGA 1894 s9 (1) (I)                            | Play Park      |
| GAPTC                                | CiLCA Training Costs                        | BACS (31/03/2023) | £395.00           | LGA 1972 s111                                  | Training       |
|                                      |                                             | <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>£21,662.96</b> |                                                |                |

### Payments agreed at meeting:

| Payee                                   | Details                                           | Method            | Amount  | Power                                                               | Budget        |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| PKF Littlejohn                          | Externa Audit Fees                                | BACS (31/03/2023) | £300.00 | Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 - Accounts & Audit Regs' 2015 | General Admin |
| Scribe Accounts (Starboard Systems Ltd) | Accountancy Software – Annual fee & initial setup | BACS              | £714.00 | LG(FP)A 1963 s5                                                     | Software      |
| EE Limited                              | Clerks Mobile Telephone                           | BACS (15/0/2023)  | £30.00  | LG(FP)A 1963 S5                                                     | General Admin |

|                           |                                                    |                           |                 |                   |                               |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| UK Debt Management Office | Public Works Loan Board – Play Park Loan Repayment | Direct Debit (24/04/2023) | £1588.96        | LGA 2003 S1 par 2 | Play Area (Repayment of Loan) |
| 99 Web                    | Monthly website maintenance                        | BACS                      | £30.00          | LGA 1972 s142     | Communications                |
| GAPTC                     | Annual Membership Fees                             | BACS                      | £457.67         | LGA 1972 s111     | Subscriptions                 |
|                           |                                                    | <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>£3120.63</b> |                   |                               |

### Receipts & inter account transfers made since last meeting:

#### Receipts

09/02/23 General Reserves Account - Interest £13.60

09/02/23 Play Park Account - Interest £0.96

#### Transfers

29/03/23 Transferred from Reserves Account to Current Account - £750.00

- Cllr Barker and Cllr Gough carried out the financial check of the Councils accounts for the period 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2023 to the account's reconciliation date of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023, and all figures are confirmed as being correct, and all relevant invoices present. All members received a copy of the bank reconciliation form.
- Council received and reviewed the budget versus spend report up to the 2022/23 financial year end.
- Council received the bank reconciliation for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023.
- Council received an update on its current VAT position. Chairman advised that the relevant data had been collated for the full 2022/23 financial year, and based on all Council expenditure falling within that year, a VAT reclaim of £7561.62 was now due to the Council. It was agreed that the Chair would proceed with the submission of a s126 Vat Reclaim to HMRC. Once received, these funds would be transferred to the Councils 'Reserve' Account. **Action:** Clerk

### 29. Motion to exclude the Public and Press

*Due to the confidential nature of matters to be discussed, the Council agreed to suspend Standing Orders so that they may continue in 'closed session', as allowed for under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.*

#### Closed Session

### 30. Staffing Issues

Council considered the ongoing lack of permanent Clerk, and the absence of any applications received. The apparent shortage of Clerks, county wide, was also referenced. Whilst Cllr Nicholas had been acting as Clerk voluntarily, and significant progress had been made in drafting policies, locating missing documents and updating the PC website it was made clear that such an arrangement could not continue on an 'ad hoc' basis, particularly as elections were potentially just weeks away and the Councils audit and AGAR submission would soon be due. The subject was discussed at length, with particular focus given to the 'optics' of a Council Member holding the role of Clerk/RFO. However, given a lack of alternate candidates, the fact that he has commenced studying for a CiLCA qualification, as well as the measures implemented by Cllr Nicholas to improve

transparency (such as the new accounting software) the Council agreed that Cllr Nicholas should be offered the role of Clerk/RFO on a permanent basis, as allowed for under the Local Government Act 1972 s112 (1) & (5). This role would be unremunerated, thus delivering a substantial annual saving to the Parish of Longhope. Cllr Nicholas agreed to accept the Position.

### **31. Arrangements for next meeting of the Council**

*Due to the election rules, relating to retirement dates of current Council Members, it was explained that the Annual Parish Council Meeting could be held no earlier than the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2023. As such, it was agreed that this meeting would be scheduled for 7pm on Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup> of May at the Latchen Rooms. Newly elected Council Members will sign their acceptance of office papers at this meeting.*

*Extraordinary meeting of the Council scheduled for 18:30 on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 at the Longhope Recreation Ground Pavilion (see item 20).*

### **32. Meeting Closed at 22:30**

**Agreed by Council as being a true and accurate record of the above meeting:**

**Signed:**

**Dated:**