Helpston Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Helpston Parish Council held on Monday, 11th May 2026 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Peat (Chairman), Cllr Andy Ratnett (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Arthur Cross, Cllr Laura Currie, Cllr Alastair Bradley and Cllr Jon Williams.
In attendance: The Clerk – T Henthorn, 2 members of the public (MoP)

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

26.058 **1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received from Cllr Spooner (Holiday), and the Council formally noted the resignations of former Councillors Lee Kaminski and Alice Langford-Pollard and recorded its thanks for their service to the Parish Council. The Clerk welcomed Cllr Jon Williams to his first meeting of Helpston Parish Council following co-option to the Council. The meeting was declared quorate.

26.059 **2. Election of Chairman**
RESOLVED: That Cllr Alastair Peat be elected Chairman for the municipal year 2026–2027.
Proposed: Cllr Currie Seconded: Cllr Cross
The Chairman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took the chair.

26.060 **3. Election of Vice-Chairman**
RESOLVED: That Cllr Andrew Ratnett be elected Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2026–2027.
Proposed: Cllr Currie Seconded: Cllr Williams

26.061 **4. Declarations of Interest**: None declared.

26.062 **5. Confirmation of Previous Minutes**
5.1 Annual Council Meeting Minutes — 12 May 2025. RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Annual Council Meeting held on 12 May 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record.

26.063 **6. Governance and Council Administration**
6.1 Mandatory Governance Policies — Annual Review. The Clerk explained that the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and Code of Conduct were key governance documents that required annual review. These documents had been updated against the current model documents and legislation and had been subject to governance review by Cllr Cross.
6.1.1 Standing Orders. Reviewed.
6.1.2 Financial Regulations. Reviewed
6.1.3 Code of Conduct. Reviewed

6.1.4 Complaints Procedure. Members considered the Complaints Procedure and agreed that minor amendments should be incorporated.
6.1.5 Business Continuity Plan. Members considered the draft Business Continuity Plan and agreed that a revised, proportionate version suitable for a parish council context should be prepared by the Clerk for review at a future meeting.

6.1.6 Equality Policy — Development.

6.1.7 Health & Safety Policy — Development.
6.1.8 Safeguarding Policy — Development.
6.1.9 Training and Development Policy — Development.

The Clerk reported that these priority governance documents were not currently in place and should be developed. The Clerk proposed preparing initial drafts and continuing the review approach used for the earlier governance documents, with Cllr Cross assisting from a governance perspective where available.

6.1.10 Governance Risk Register — Annual Review. The Governance Risk Register 2026 was considered. Cllr Cross confirmed that he had reviewed an earlier draft and considered the final register to be proportionate and appropriately presented. The Council acknowledged the review input provided and agreed the content of the register.
6.1.11 Review of Committees and Working Groups. The discussion focused on committee structures and working group arrangements. Members reviewed the current committee and working group arrangements. The fly-tipping working group would continue pending review following future co-options.

6.1.12 Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies
The following appointments were agreed:
- Tarmac: Cllr Peat
- Churchyard and Cemetery: Cllr Currie and Cllr Williams
- John Clare Primary School: Cllr Bradley
- James Bradford Almshouses: Cllr Peat
- Barnack Ward Group: Cllr Peat and Cllr Ratnett
- MAG007: Cllr Spooner
- Peterborough Good Neighbours Scheme: Cllr Spooner

6.1.13 Review of Insurance Cover and Adequacy. Members reviewed the Council's insurance arrangements and noted that a cross-check between the Asset Register and insurance schedule would be undertaken at the June 2026 meeting. Members discussed potential assets and liabilities requiring clarification, including the village green, John Clare memorial/features, the Buttercross, street furniture, the telephone box, the cemetery wall, churchyard/cemetery responsibilities and the microphone/audio equipment. It was agreed that the asset register and insurance schedule should be cross-checked before renewal, and that the Clerk should seek background information from Syd Smith on ownership and responsibility for green spaces and village features
6.1.14 Approval of Meeting Schedule for the Municipal Year.

<u>RESOLVED</u>:

a) To adopt Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Code of Conduct for 2026/27;
b) To commission updated Complaints, Business Continuity, Equality, Health & Safety, Safeguarding and Training policies for phased consideration during 2026;
c) To approve the Governance Risk Register, insurance arrangements, external appointments and meeting schedule for 2026–2027. Meeting schedule to be published on the website.
Proposed by Cllr Ratnett, seconded by Cllr Bradley

26.064 **7. Close of Annual Meeting**. The Chairman closed the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at 8.12 pm.

ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

26.065 **8. Attendance and Apologies for Absence**. Apologies were received from: Cllr Spooner

26.066 **9. Public Forum**. The meeting was adjourned at 8.15 pm to allow members of the public to address the Council. A resident raised concerns regarding highway markings on private driveway entrances. Members noted the comments and agreed to monitor the matter. The meeting reconvened at 8.26 pm

26.067 **10. Declarations of Interest**. None declared

26.068 **11**. **Confirmation of Previous Minutes**. RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 13 April 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Proposed by Cllr Cross, seconded by Cllr Currie

26.069 **12. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**
12.1 Microphone / Audio System Installation — Alternative quotations and technical advice continue to be investigated -
12.2 Traffic Survey — Members noted ongoing liaison regarding traffic survey quotations and potential collaborative work with neighbouring councils.
12.3 Speedwatch Liaison — Members noted continued recruitment efforts for additional Speedwatch volunteers.

26.070 **13. Planning Applications Received**
13.1 26/002192/LBC. 'No Objection' to be submitted
13.2 26/002202/DISCHG. Noted
13.3 26/002231/DISCHG. Noted
13.4 Planning — Pending Applications / Matters Outstanding. Cllr Cross reported that, since the meeting of 13 April 2026, there had been no material movement from the City Council's local planning authority.

26.071 **14. Planning — City Decisions**
14.1 26/00210/DISCHG — Plot 2, Old Helpston Garden Centre**.** The decision was noted.

26.072 **15. Finance and Governance**
15.1 Finance — Receipts and Payments. RESOLVED: That the schedule of payments, receipts and bank reconciliation be approved. *Proposed by Cllr Peat, seconded by Cllr Cross.*

15.2 Clerk Expenses Framework — April 2026 Onwards. RESOLVED: That the Clerk Expenses Governance Framework be approved. *Proposed by Cllr Peat, seconded by Cllr Williams*

15.3 Banking Arrangements — Dual Authorisation Controls. Members discussed banking governance and the requirement for dual authorisation controls for electronic payments.
RESOLVED:
a) That the Council confirms its intention to operate dual authorisation controls for electronic banking;
b) That the Clerk review the capability of the current Virgin Money account; and
c) That alternative providers, including Unity Trust Bank, be investigated if necessary.
Proposed by Cllr Cross, seconded by Cllr Ratnett.

15.4 Internal Audit Report. The Internal Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2026 was received and noted.
15.5 Annual Governance Statement — Section 1 (AGAR). RESOLVED: That Section 1 — Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 be approved for signature by the Chairman and Clerk.
15.6 Accounting Statements — Section 2 (AGAR). RESOLVED: That Section 2 — Accounting Statements 2025/26 be approved for signature by the Chairman.
15.7 Reserves Position — 31 March 2026. The year-end reserves position and earmarked reserve allocations were noted.

15.8 Exercise of Public Rights — Approval of Dates. RESOLVED: That the Exercise of Public Rights period shall commence on Monday, 15 June 2026, and conclude on Friday, 24 July 2026.
15.9 Asset Register — Annual Review. RESOLVED: That the Asset Register value as at 31 March 2026 be confirmed.
15.10 Internal Control Effectiveness Review. *RESOLVED*: That the Council confirms that its system of internal control has been reviewed and is considered effective for the financial year ending 31 March 2026. *Items 15.4 to 15.10 were proposed by Cllr Peat and seconded by Cllr Ratnett.*

26.073 **16. Reports**
16.1 Member Development — Training Google Training dates booked for Monday 18 May (10.00-11.00 am) and Tuesday 2 June (11.00-12.00 pm). Clerk to email councillors with their allocated time slots.

16.2 AMVC Cycle Path Update - Members received an update regarding school travel arrangements, bus passes and congestion concerns. A discussion took place regarding traffic volumes, parking pressures, and potential additional pickup arrangements in the Upper West Street area and Glinton Road Bridge

26.074 **17. Correspondence**
17.1 Network Rail Update. The Clerk reported that updated correspondence from Network Rail regarding the level crossing had been circulated prior to the meeting. Members discussed barrier timings, public understanding of warning sequences and safeguarding considerations arising from the earlier school incident. The correspondence and associated discussion were noted.

26.075 **18. Items for Future Agenda**
• Equality Policy
• Health & Safety Policy
• Safeguarding Policy
• Revised Complaints Procedure
• Revised Business Continuity Plan
• John Clare weekend update
• Co-option process and councillor recruitment update.

26.076 **19. Date of Next Meeting**
Monday 8 June 2026 — Helpston Village Hall — 7.30 pm

Votes: Unanimous, unless otherwise stated.

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm.