

Hawstead Parish Council - Clerk report

11th May 2023

The aim of this report is to provide comments on agenda items and to update the Parish Councillors on:-

- correspondence received, sent and circulated since the last meeting
- Training attended since the last meeting
- Clerks' activity since March 2023
- Planning decisions

2.5 Suffolk Constabulary most recent newsletter

<https://www.suffolk.police.uk/sites/suffolk/files/2023-04/CEO%20Constables%20County%20Mar.pdf>

Notes on items 8.1-8.10

Documents for review and approval:

8.2 Standing Orders and Financial Regulation Orders and Code of Conduct (review and re-adoption); these documents are based on the model templates issued by SALC; the templates have not changed during the course of this year. In 2014 HPC adopted a filming protocol which is included in the Standing Orders.

Items to Note:

8.3 review of asset register (last reviewed in March 2023).

8.4 Review of arrangements with other businesses (ICO/1&1/ SALC);

The PC is a data controller and as such must subscribe to the ICO (£35pa).

The PC employs SALC as payroll provider at £38 pa.

The PC pays 1&1 (now Ionos) for use of the website and email platform cost circa £300pa.

8.5 Review of appointments to outside bodies (none at present);

8.6 Confirmation of insurance cover for all insurable risks; The Council's insurance (BHIB underwriter - Aviva) provides property cover of up to £51,000 for contents, street furniture and gates and fences; The existing cover is adequate for the current range of assets; please note that £50,000 Fidelity cover is provided which is adequate to cover the funds held by the Council in its bank account.

8.7 Review of Councils subscriptions to other bodies (SALC) The PC subscribes to SALC for training, support and news. Cost £38.89pa. Further information shown at [SALC – Suffolk Association of Local Councils.](#) The PC also subscribes to The Open Space Society [OSS](#), (£45pa) Suffolk Preservation Society [SPS](#) (£30pa) and Suffolk Wildlife Trust [SWT](#).

8.8 Review and re-confirm current range of policies; The current policies include disciplinary, grievance, reserves, complaints, subject access request, data protection, FOI, Equal opportunities; on the website [policies](#) and are due for review in May 2023 – no substantive changes recommended; the reserves policy requires updating in order to ensure general reserves are below the precept level from time to time and is on the agenda at item 10.7.

8.9 Review of expenditure under s137 Local Authority Act 1972/General Power of Competence; it is proposed that the Council should re-declare that the conditions for the general power of competence have been met (over 2/3 of councillors appointed following election; clerk qualification and resolution); Once the general power of competence has been re-declared it should then use s1

Localism Act 2011 rather than s137 LGA 1972 to support any grants in relation to which it has no alternative specific powers.

8.10 Meeting dates for 2023/24.

11th May 2023

13th July 2023

14th September 2023

9th November 2023

11th January 2024

14th March 2024

8.11 Website

Organisations including PCs are under a legal duty to publish a website accessibility statement confirming compliance with accessibility legislation. Failure to have this statement published has previously been picked up on audit. The clerk has been unable to identify a supplier able to undertake the accessibility audit, despite having approached SALC and various other consultants.

Local IT expert AB advised that:-

Through my employment, I am aware of a company that almost exclusively do Accessibility audits and completed one for a project we worked on for the NHS. Their company is called the Shaw Trust and they can complete Accessibility audits for a site <https://www.accessibility-services.co.uk/services/>

I would advise that what I do know of Website development, that the current site would likely fail an audit. I see that recently some colours have been addressed so there are less instances of yellow text on white backgrounds and other font issues, but overall, the layout of the site and general theme would render the site very difficult to navigate as a partially sighted or blind user who is utilising a screen reader. This is in no small part due to the site being quite old and using a very old theme, but also due to inconsistent use of H1, H2 and H3 tags.

I would suggest that the Parish Council site needs a ground up rebuild to not only improve its accessibility but also its general usability as in its current format, important information can very quickly become lost. I wonder if the goals of the Parish council may be well served by having a much slimmed down brochure site that shares key information that is legally required and is kept as clean and accessible as possible, with a separate site (which could remain the current site, but with a different URL) to act as an archive for Village history, historic news etc.

The Shaw Trust have **quoted £3958 plus VAT** to undertake an accessibility audit. This seems an excessive cost in the context of the size and resources of the Council.

SALC has advised that as the current website is owned and paid for by the PC, the accessibility regulations apply to all content, including the community pages which are administered by volunteers.

The clerk has gone back to Suffolk Cloud which has previously quoted to transfer the website content onto the Suffolk Cloud platform £150 plus £120 annual hosting charge plus email at £15 plus £25 per email box to check whether this quote still stands and to enquire whether they can arrange to create a new compliant website, complete with linked email and website accessibility statement together with link to the community pages of the current website which will form an archive of community info. All new information on the PC website (community/PC) should however be loaded onto the new platform.

The Council is requested to endorse a proposal to switch to Suffolk Cloud, (to replace 1&1/Ionos website/email) provided that the archive of community info on the existing website can be retained/ a separate URL provided. In the meantime an accessibility statement highlighting that the accessibility statement is still under review will be posted on the website.

The website administrator for community information needs to be consulted about any such change and training offered if necessary.

9.1 Planning decisions

None.

Item 10.8 Bank mandate

The following members/staff are on the bank mandate with full signatory access (including online authorisation)

RA, PB, HB, CH

It is proposed to continue with online banking wherever possible.

12. Correspondence

Indication is given where an item has already been circulated by email and/ or is under consideration at this meeting and /or has been circulated for this meeting. Please request copies of anything you have not received

| Date | Detail | Action | Email circulation | Agenda item | Circulated with agenda |
|----------|---|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 07.03.23 | Open letter on neighbourhood planning | | 15.03.23 | 12.2 | yes |
| 07.03.23 | Info on alternative fuel payments | 1/5/23 To VV/Website | | | |
| 07.03.23 | SALC training bulletin | | | | |
| 09.03.23 | SCC confirmation that Hawstead will go onto the next ANPR rota | | | | |
| 13.03.23 | SALC bulletin | | 15.03.23 | | |
| 14.03.23 | SALC bulletin | | | | |
| 16.03.23 | OSS bulletin | | 29.03.23 | | |
| 16.03.23 | Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Joint Local Plan Modifications Consultation 2023 REF: MOD/2223/CR | | | | |
| 16.03.23 | Open spaces and paths: a new guide to protection | | 1.5.23 | | |
| 20.03.23 | SALC bulletin | | 29.03.23 | | |
| 21.03.23 | SALC bulletin | | 29.03.23 | | |
| 2.03.23 | The Local Councillor | | 29.03.23 | | |
| 27.03.23 | RPA acknowledgment of new countryside stewardship agreement | | | | |
| 28.03.23 | SAC bulletin | | 29.03.23 | | |
| 28.03.23 | Play area report March – no change | | | 12.1 | |
| 31.03.23 | Info from OSS | | 1.5.23 | | |
| 03.04.23 | CAB newsletter | To VV/Website 1/5/23 | | | |
| 04/04/23 | EP Passenger Interest Group meeting held on 14.03.23. | | | | |
| 03/04/23 | SALC bulletin | | 29/03/23 | | |
| 4/4/23 | SALC training bulletin | | 29/04/23 | | |
| 5/4/23 | Announcement from the Leader, West Suffolk Council | | 29/04/23 | | |
| 09/04/23 | Feedback aboyut Lost Footpath project | To CC 25/04/23 | | | |
| 11/04/23 | Post election material | | 25/04/23 | | |
| 11/04/23 | OSS renewal | | | 10.3 | |
| 11/04/23 | SALC bulletin | | 29/04/23 | | |
| 17/04/23 | SALC bulletin | | 29/04/23 | | |
| 17/04/23 | K Soons report | | 29/04/23 | 3.2 | yes |
| 18/04/23 | SALC bulletin | | 29/04/23 | | |
| 26/04/23 | Info on post election procedures | | 25/04/23 | | |
| 27/04/23 | Election material – registers of interests | | 29/04/23 | 4.1 | yes |
| 27/04.23 | Info re heritage buildings project | To AP for church 29/4 | | | |
| 27.04.23 | OSS newsletter | | 29/4/23 | | |
| 28.04.23 | Foorptha project feedback | To CC 29/4/23 | | | |
| 28.04.23 | Play area repost for April – no new comments | | | 12.1 | |

TRAINING

CLERK'S ACTIVITY March-April 2023

| Date | Activity | Time |
|------|---|--------------|
| | Prepare for and minute PC meeting March and April 2023 | |
| | Email correspondence, finance and admin; footpath correspondence; year end accounts | |
| | TOTAL | 45.00 |