

NOTES FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON **WEDNESDAY 13th May 2026**
in the Memorial Hall, Helpringham

PRESENT:

Councillors: Geoff Hotchkin, Julie Frizzell, George Frizzell, Mark Robinson, Steve Waterfield, John Pittock, Adam Young.

Clerk/RFO: Judy Pittock

One member of public

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm

14/27 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN for 2026/27

The Clerk took the Chair for this item. It was proposed by Cllr Geoff Hotchkin, Cllr Steve Waterfield seconded and unanimously resolved to elect Cllr Julie Frizzell as Chair. Cllr Julie Frizzell accepted and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Upon election, Cllr Julie Frizzell asked to present a formal note of thanks to Cllr Hotchkin in recognition of his 25 years of service as Chairman to the Parish Council.

Valedictory Statement for Councillor Geoff Hotchkin

Tonight marks the end of an era for Helpringham Parish Council.

For more than twenty-five years, Councillor Geoff Hotchkin has given this village something that is increasingly rare in public life: steady, consistent, quietly exemplary service.

Geoff has chaired this Council since 2000. He has seen us through the shift from paper minutes and landlines to a world of smartphones, broadband, and now fast-moving AI. When he began, mobile phones were just that, phones. Today, we operate in a digital landscape that would have been unimaginable at the turn of the millennium. Through all of it, Geoff has kept the Council grounded, practical, and focused on what matters for the people who live here.

That steadiness was never more visible than during the pandemic. When the world moved overnight onto Zoom, Geoff took on the challenge without fuss or drama. He learned what he needed to learn, adapted, and kept the Council functioning so that the village had continuity, clarity, and leadership at a time when everything else felt uncertain.

And it hasn't all been easy. We have faced some immensely difficult moments together, including the discovery of a fraud that shook the Council to its core. Through that period, Geoff stood by our side with the same calm, principled presence he has shown throughout his service. He helped steer us through it with integrity and resolve, ensuring we emerged stronger and more transparent.

His commitment has never been theoretical. It has been lived, week in and week out, across more than two decades. He has been a presence in and around the village for as long as most of us can remember. He has served as a school governor for our small but exceptional primary school. And he is still, in his eighties, a working farmer. That alone tells you everything you need to know about his work ethic, his resilience, and his sense of duty.

For many of us, Geoff has been the village's analogue version of Google. If you wanted to know anything about Helpringham, its history, its quirks, its boundaries, its past decisions, or why something is the way it is, you asked Geoff. And he always knew. Not because it was written down somewhere, but because he had lived it, stewarded it, and cared enough to remember.

It is a privilege to take the baton of chairing this Council from him. These are big shoes to fill, and I am under no illusion about that. But we are fortunate, genuinely fortunate, that Geoff is staying on as our Vice Chairman. His knowledge, his steadiness, and his deep understanding of this village will continue to guide us.

Geoff, on behalf of the Council and the community, thank you.

For your service, your constancy, and your care for Helpringham.

We stand on the foundations you have built.

15/27 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR for 2026/27

It was proposed by Cllr Julie Frizzell, seconded by Cllr John Pittock seconded and unanimously resolved to elect Cllr Geoff Hotchkin as Vice-Chairman. Cllr Hotchkin accepted and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

16/27 PUBLIC FORUM

It was unanimously resolved to suspend the meeting to allow a period for public participation of up to 10 minutes. No items were raised and the public forum was closed.

17/27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies had been received.

18/27 DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

No updated forms were required and there were no declarations of interest for the meeting.

19/27 COMPLETION OF GDPR COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST BY ALL COUNCILLORS AND CLERK

All Councillors and the Clerk completed the required form and returned them to the clerk.

20/27 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

To was resolved to accept the Clerk's notes of the last Parish Council Meeting held on 8th April 2026 as a true record.

33/27 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PLAN

It was resolved to bring this item forward and Mrs Mandy Fountain was invited to join the discussion.

- Cllr Julie Frizzell confirmed that the Plan had been accepted by Lincs Emergency Planning but further information had not been received in time to access various training sessions. The Clerk will chase LincsEP for updates.
- Mrs Fountain suggested compiling a list of residents with 4x4 vehicles and farmers who would be willing to assist in an emergency. This and a village WhatsApp or email group will be explored.
- Flooding is still an issue on Station Road with the potential of leading to road closures. The Clerk will chase Cllr East regarding LCC Highways clearing the dyke.

The Council thanked Mrs Fountain for her input and for volunteering to take part in the scheme.

21/27 APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS and REPRESENTATIVES

It was unanimously resolved to make the following Officer appointments:

- Cemetery Officer – Cllr George Frizzell
- HR Officers – Cllrs Adam Young and Julie Frizzell
- Conservation Area Officer – Cllrs George Frizzell and Steve Waterfield
- Community Resilience Plan Officers – Cllrs Julie Frizzell and Adam Young and the Clerk
- Website and Social Media Officer – Cllr George Frizzell
- Representative for local community groups - the Clerk

It was also resolved to make the following additional appointments:

- Highways Liaison Officer - Cllr John Pittock
- Speed Awareness Officer - Cllr Steve Waterfield

22/27 REPORTS FROM COUNTY and DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

No report had been received from County Cllr David East.

The report from District Cllr J Russell Jackson is attached with attention drawn to:

- **Food waste recycling** – there have been very positive results with over 950t collected across four districts. This has been turned into energy and fertiliser, supporting local agriculture and generating renewable power.
- **Armed Forces Week in Sleaford 22nd-24th June 2026.** On 22nd June 2026 at 10.30am there is a free event in the Market Place for serving military, veterans' groups, civic dignitaries, the local community and charities to attend. This will be followed by the Celebration of Military Service to be held at NKDC Council Chambers, Kesteven Street, Sleaford. Tickets can be obtained from NKDC by calling 01529 414155 (Partnerships Team) or via email: armedforces@n-kesteve.gov.uk.
- **Crisis and Resilience Fund** – support for those experiencing immediate financial hardship due to the increased heating oil prices. Email: costofliving@lincoln.gov.uk

23/27 CLERK and COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS

Key updates include:

- New bin installed on the playing field - responsibility to be passed on to the Playing Field Committee.
- Two of the seats by the school have been replaced.
- The new name plaque installed on the noticeboard. The Parish Council extends its thanks to Neil Yarwood for supplying this.
- Digital Hub – it was agreed that the Clerk should approach the Community Café to see if it could be held there.
- Two new dog waste bins have been installed. One on South Drove and the other at the end of Vicarage Lane. The Parish Council thanks Nev Barnes for allowing his fence to be used on Vicarage Lane.
- Bank signatories – all forms have been submitted, awaiting confirmation from Unity Trust Bank.

24/27 COUNCIL POLICIES

To was resolved to adopt the following new policies and thanks was extending to Cllr Young for his help with ensuring the Council is now compliant with the new Employment Rights Act 2025:

- Antbullying and Harassment
- Equality and Diversity
- Sickness Absence
- Whistleblowing
- Grant Policy and application form 2026/27

25/27 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 26/0476/FUL – Devonport Farm, North Drove – no observations were made and it was resolved to support the application.

The two following decision notices were noted:

- 26/0238/HOUS – The Mill, 38 High Gate – application for extensions and alterations – approved
- 26/0239/LBC – The Mill, 38 High Gate – listed building consent re 26/0238/HOUS - approved

26/27 INTERNAL AUDIT and AGAR

- It was resolved to accept the Internal Auditors report.

As income exceeded £25,000 in 2025/26 the Council is no longer eligible for Exemption from external audit. The Clerk therefore completed Form 3 for AGAR and it was resolved to complete and sign the following documents:

- AGAR 2025/26 Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement.
- AGAR 2025/26 Section 2 - Accounting Statement.
- AGAR 2025/26 Bank Reconciliation and Explanation of Variances.
- 2025/26 List of expenditure over £500 as required under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015
- It was agreed that the dates for the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return would be set at 3/6/26-14/7/26 – notices will be displayed on the Parish Council website and noticeboard.

The Council thanked the Clerk for her work in ensuring that the Council remains compliant in all governance matters.

27/27 FINANCE

27/27.1 It was resolved to accept following documents presented by the RFO for the period 1/4 - 13/5/26:

- Bank reconciliation
- Actual v budget figures

27/27.2 It was resolved to approve payments presented at the meeting totalling £1,672.91:

CJP Garden Services	Invs 1047/1052/1059	£865.10	No VAT
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Clerk's Wages	April 2026	£275.00	No VAT
Clerk's Expenses	Adhesive, paper, storage wallets	£43.16	No VAT
HMRC	PAYE April 2026	£68.60	No VAT
Victoria Clark	Inv 260407HPC – Internal Audit 2025/26	£53.50	No Vat
Glasdon UK Ltd	Inv SI936879 – dog waste bins	£363.06	£60.50
Black Sluice	Drainage Rates 1Apr26-31Mar27	£4.49	No VAT

It was also resolved that payment to CJP Grass Cutting Services for grasscutting w/c 11May2026 would be approved in principle and payment paid on receipt, subject to the amount being no more than the standard price of £401.60.

27/27.3 The following Direct Debit payments since 8/4/26 were noted:

18/3/26	E.ON inv0019 – memorial light electricity	£19.64	£0.94
30/4/26	Unity Trust Bank – service charges	£7.00	No VAT
1/5/26	NKDC – Green Waste Bin	£80.00	No VAT

27/27.4 It was resolved to accept the following Direct Debit payments for the 2026/27 year

Unity Bank – bank charges	£7.00	Monthly
EON Next – memorial light electricity	Variable	Monthly
NKDC – green waste bins in cemetery	£80.00	Annual
Anglian Water – cemetery water supply	Variable	Quarterly
ICO – Information Commissioner	£47.00	Annual

27/27.5 The following receipts since 8/4/26 were noted:

1/4/26	NKDC – Precept	£20,580.00
1/4/26	Pinfold Rent	£60.00
16/4/26	Lincs Coop Funeral inv65	£150.00
24/4/26	NKDC – CIL	£2035.11
6/5/26	Colin Ward Funeral inv68	£150.00
13/5/26	Matthew Burt (Stonemason) inv69	£30.00

28/27.6 RESERVES

Discussion was held about General and Earmarked Reserves and the following was resolved:

- The balance in the current account should be kept at £5,000 and all other funds from this account be moved to the savings account as part of the General Reserve.
- £1,732.55 should be moved into the CIL Reserve.
- £1,000 should be moved into the Election Costs Reserve.
- £500 should be moved into the Tree Maintenance Reserve.

The Clerk/RFO will be responsible for making the transfers and ensuring that there is always sufficient funds in the current account to cover cashflow requirements.

29/27.7 INSURANCE

It was resolved to accept the quote of £660.28 for Year 2 of the three year agreement with Ansvar.

30/27.6 CIL RECEIPTS

CIL funds of £4,403.69 are currently held. This money can only be spent on infrastructure improvements that benefit the parish. Discussion was held about the most appropriate way to use the funds with suggestions being made about improving the pond area (including relocating the bench), installing more dog waste bins (by the red bridge and on North Drove). It was resolved that the clerk should obtain quotes for tidying the pond area and that residents would be asked how they would like the funds spent.

31/27 CEMETERY and GRASSCUTTING

Cllr George Frizzell reported the following:

- Interment to plot J38 on 13/5/26
- Topple test had been postponed.

- He also requested that the levelling of plots J12, J34 and J41 be approved at a cost of £25.00 each. Grasscutting – the usual high standard was being maintained.

32/27 HIGHWAY MATTERS

The Parish Council reviewed the formal complaint submitted to Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) regarding the deteriorating condition of the B1394 embankment and wider concerns about highways governance. Issues Raised by the Parish Council were:

- Progressive structural failure on the B1394;
- Concern that LCC is relying on monitoring only, rather than undertaking preventative stabilisation works;
- Alleged misuse of Section 52 emergency powers under the New Roads and Street Works Act;
- Frequent use of full road closures for minor works where less disruptive traffic management could be used;
- Limitations of FixMyStreet;
- Concerns about the quality and durability of maintenance works, including repeated failures;
- Potential financial, safety and governance risks arising from inaction.

Summary of LCC’s Response to date:

- A geotechnical investigation of the B1394 has been initiated, though no timeline, scope or contractor details were provided.
- The Environment Agency will not stabilise the bank, as the slip does not currently pose a flood-risk priority.
- Acknowledgement that previous assessments were carried out but not recorded in writing.
- Budget constraints limit them to a “make safe and monitor” approach until the investigation is complete.
- Defending its use of Section 52, claiming it is lawful and consistent with internal policy for defects requiring repair within 22 hours, 6 days or 25 days.
- Justifying full road closures on minor works as necessary for speed and safety on Category 4 roads.
- Acknowledgement of material failures, workmanship issues and subcontractor variability, but states that contractors must rectify defects at their own cost.
- FixMyStreet reports are treated as surface-level fault reports, not structural assessments.

Cllr John Pittock proposed that the next steps should be:

- The Parish Council escalate the complaint to Stage 2 due to unresolved concerns.
- Make a submission to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Issue briefings to Gareth Davies MP and the Mayor of Lincolnshire.
- Continue to press for a clear timetable for the geotechnical investigation of the B1394 and for LCC to meet its statutory obligations under the Highways Act.

It was unanimously resolved that Cllr Pittock should submit the draft correspondence that he had issued to Councillors in support of these steps. The Council thanked Cllr Pittock for his continued work on these issues.

Other Highways matters:

- 30mph extension on Station Road to the railway bridge – clerk continuing to chase for an update on this.
- Traffic Closure Notices – clerk waiting for a response from LCC Highways about why these are no longer received.
- The following issues have been reported on FixMyStreet by the Council:

Date Reported	Ref No	Location	Issue	Status
05/12/2025	2864369	Engine Drove	Multiple potholes	13/5/26 Road resurfacing works due to have started. 5 days duration. Road closure (no notification received) LCC Job Ref 3006607
09/01/2026	2868438	Station Rd - bridge	Overgrown hedge	7/5/26 Requested further action.
18/04/2026	2888803	North Drove	Potholes	22/4/26 Work issued to delivery gang
18/04/2026	2888806	North Drove	Potholes	22/4/26 Work issued to delivery gang
18/04/2026	2888807	North Drove	Potholes	22/4/26 Work issued to delivery gang

18/04/2026	2888809	North Drove	Potholes	22/4/26 Work issued to delivery gang
18/04/2026	2888812	North Drove	Potholes	22/4/26 Work issued to delivery gang
18/04/2026	2888816	North Drove	Abandoned road closure sign	7/5/26 report closed (pieces had been removed)
07/05/2026	2890784	Wheelwright Lane	Overgrown hedge	7/5/26 Further investigation required by LCC
07/05/2026	2890785	Wheelwright Lane	Potholes	11/5/26 Work issued to delivery gang

33/27 MATTERS AFFECTING THE VILLAGE/CORRESPONDENCE

- Reports received from HAVCS and Citizens Advice following receipt of grants awards were noted and are attached.
- The latest newsletter about the proposed reservoir had been circulated and a link put on the Council website.

34/27 Items for inclusion on next agenda:

- Recognition of the service given to the Parish by Cllr Hotchkin.
- Council Action plan for the Council.
- Speed sign maintenance
- CIL allocation.

35/27 Date and time of the next meeting –**Wednesday 10/6/26 2026 commencing at 7.30pm.** All meetings will be held in the Memorial Hall, Helpringham.

10 th June commencing at 7.30pm	9 th September commencing at 7.30pm.	9 th December commencing at 7.00pm.
8 th July commencing at 7.30pm.	14 th October commencing at 7.30pm	
12 th August commencing at 7.30pm.	11 th November commencing at 7.00pm.	

The meeting closed at 8.53pm