

Harston Annual Parish Meeting



Wednesday 23rd April 2025
Harston Village Hall

The meeting opened at 7.00pm

In attendance:

Dominic Bellamy (Chairman)

Councillor Luffman; Councillor Carroll; Councillor Clarke; Councillor Reynolds; Councillor Pearce Gould

9 Electors

Jessica Ward (Clerk to the Council)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed all those in attendance to the meeting.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting

It was proposed by Gaynor, seconded by Reynolds and resolved that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held 25th April 2024 are approved and signed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of Harston Parish Meeting 2024

No matters arising from the minutes of Harston annual parish meeting in 2024.

4. Parish Council Accounts

It was proposed by Mike Luffman, seconded by Rupert Pearce Gould, and resolved that the audited accounts for 2023-2024 as presented to the meeting are accepted.

5. Chairman's Annual Report - Period April 1st 2024 to March 31st 2025

Councillor Dom Bellamy and Councillor Paul Holdom continued their roles as Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the year 2024-2025. We currently have a full house of 11 Councillors following 1 leaver and 2 new Councillors joining during the year. We have a well balanced mix all genders, age groups and backgrounds across the Council. The Council continues to operate 2 official committees in support of the full council - one for finance and the other for planning applications. The finance committee always meets immediately before the main parish Council on the first Thursday of the month. The planning committee on a separate date if needed. This year applications have been quite low and have therefore been included in the main parish meeting for time efficiency. A temporary fence/ barrier has been erected by South Cambs District Council (SCDC) along the High Street at the intersection with Church Street following the collapse of the original wooden fence alongside the drainage ditch. This situation has been progressively worsening over a period of at least 18 months. Following regular progress chasing efforts and the intervention of our local County Councillors we have been advised that the fence will be repaired as a priority in the near future. The Parish Council continues to support the Melbourn Mobile Warden Scheme (MMWS) following the closure of the Harston Village Warden Trust (HVWT). This scheme provides an invaluable support service to some of our most vulnerable residents within Harston. I am pleased to advise the transfer to the MMWS scheme has proved very successful. The Parish Council continues to support the Harston Residents Group and work with them on a number of issues e.g. transport, and financially assist them with Insurance to run events, hosting costs for their website and materials for the planting projects around the village including the War Memorial. I would like to express our thanks for the twice yearly litter pick HRG organise and the excellent plant maintenance at the war memorial, work they took on from Roger Summerfield who

voluntarily maintained the plants for several years. East West Rail (EWR) - This year has been very active on the subject of EWR following a further consultation submission round ending in January 2025. A working party was formed consisting of Councillors, Harston Resident Group and several independent residents to firstly inform all of our village residents of the current plans EWR are proposing for Harston - following on from the earlier 2021 consultation and clearly describe and explain the impacts of these proposals on our community and our village. Leaflets, village meetings, videos and more were organised. And most importantly encourage all residents to respond to the consultation personally as it effects them. The feedback from all this activity culminated in a Parish Council official response which can be viewed on the PC website. Councillors continue to work hard and engage with EWR officials, local neighbour villages and politicians to make our voice heard and encourage sensible alternatives to the proposed plans which in current form will cause significant harm to Harston and its surrounding countryside with zero benefits to those living here. Two new benches have been installed the cemetery to replace broken furniture. The Parish Council has re-applied under the District Council scheme to reduce the speed limit to 20mph on Station Road, Church Street and Button End following an unsuccessful application the previous year. This is a points based system for very limited funding but nevertheless believe this is right for Harston residents. In fact a survey of residents yielded an 88% positive response from a total of 82 submissions. The Parish Council has purchased a six new solar powered Speed Indicator Devices (SID) following popular and successful use of the original equipment. This will give us a total of 7 solar units whilst 2 old battery powered devices will be retired. It collects speed data from passing vehicles and flashes the speed to approaching drivers which all helps to mitigate speeding behaviour. I would like to thank the small team of residents who diligently manage the erection and mobile deployment of these devices whilst also collecting important data on speed activity around the village. Sadly a leading member of the team, Martin Harris, passed away earlier this month. Martin was a very active Parish Councillor until a couple of years ago where he was the driving force behind the beautiful trees planted on the recreation ground. He continued helping the village by erecting the SID equipment to help make our roads safer. Our condolences go to Martin's family at this difficult time. The Neighbourhood Plan work has been progressing well. The draft plan has been published and is currently undergoing review by South Cambs District Council. Details are in a separate report to be given today. I would like to express our thanks for the considerable amount of work undertaken by Hilary Roadley and the working group to get to this point. Work already published can help ensure future planning applications properly take into account the policies created in the plan. A Parish Council working group continues to evaluate the redevelopment of the pavilion building on the recreation ground to provide more space for sporting activities plus scope to host a broader range of popular activities not currently available in the village. A potential design will be shared with residents shortly together with a call for expressions of interest from residents on use of such an enhanced facility. This will be essential to prove the viability of the project moving forward. I would like to extend my thanks to the hard work of our Parish Clerk, Jessica, now in her third year. Jessica has recently passed her CiLCA Certificate i.e. Certificate in Local Council Administration for which she studied alongside her day job. The training enables awareness the law and procedures for local councils and helps work with the planning system. It checks the ability to manage the councils activities, its finances and community engagement. I would like to thank all of our Councillors whose voluntary time and dedication is freely given to support and improve our community for the better. Finally I mentioned at the beginning that we currently have a full house of Councillors. I personally will be stepping down in May so I encourage people from all backgrounds to come forward and put their names forward for election as councillors or participate in the many activities we manage. The village has some exciting development opportunities ahead and some major challenges this is a good time to get involved.

6. To receive reports from Village Interest Groups

Report from Harston and Newton Primary School

Siobhan the head teacher of Harston and Newton primary school thanked the Parish Council for its continued support, including funding for a wildflower meadow project at the school. She highlighted the school as an important asset to the village, outlining its facilities and commitment to a broad and balanced curriculum, including sports, music, educational visits and enrichment activities. Siobhan noted the school's strong links with the community, including volunteers and local business support and promoted the school May Fair on 19th May 2025. Siobhan also outlined the financial challenges facing small schools and explained that joining an academy trust will help provide greater resilience. She encouraged continued community support and promotion of the school to local families.

Report on the River Rhee Group

Lara Hawkins, a resident of Haslingfield, presented a report on the River Rhee and the work of the Friends of the River Rhee. She outlined the pressures facing local rivers, including pollution, low flows and habitat loss and noted that recent E. coli testing by the Cam Valley Forum indicated poor water quality in parts of the river.

Lara explained that Friends of the River Rhee, supported by Haslingfield Parish Council, are undertaking regular water quality monitoring, promoting river stewardship and raising public awareness. The group currently has trained volunteers and local testing facilities. Lara invited residents of Harston to become involved in the project and noted that training and established methods could be shared, with potential future funding support.

7. Neighbourhood Plan for Harston

12-Month Summary Report submitted by Hilary Roadly.

The draft Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for Regulation 14 consultation on 22 April 2024. Summary booklets and feedback forms were delivered to all households and businesses, with online responses available and collection points provided across the village. Posters, flyers and nine drop-in sessions were held between April and June to explain the policies and gather feedback.

Responses were received from 11 statutory bodies, four local landowners/farmers and 115 residents. Between June and September, the Neighbourhood Plan working group, supported by the planning consultant, responded to consultation comments and completed the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

From October to December, required amendments were identified and incorporated into the Plan by the consultant, with input from the working group, Parish Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. The submission version of the Plan, including updated maps, was finalised, and the Consultation Statement was prepared.

In January–February 2025, the Basic Conditions Statement was completed and Regulation 16 consultation took place (9 January–20 February). Seventeen responses were received from organisations, four from residents and one from Jesus College. Responses were

considered by the working group with consultant support. The examiner provided positive feedback and requested clarifications.

Following receipt of the examiner's final report, the Plan will be updated as required and, subject to agreement with South Cambridgeshire District Council, will proceed to referendum. Eligible residents will be notified once a date is confirmed.

8. To receive County and District Councillor Reports

Annual report submitted from County and district councillors have been shared on the parish council website to view.

9. Open Forum

• Footpath Accessibility – Church Street

A resident raised serious concerns about the lack of safe wheelchair access along Church Street, citing an example of a wheelchair user being unable to travel safely to the local surgery without using a car. The Parish Council confirmed that concerns about Church Street have been raised with Highways on several occasions, including site walks with officers. It was noted that potential improvements may be linked to future Melbourne Greenway works, though no commitment has yet been received. The Council agreed to continue pressing Highways for improvements, including pavement works, to improve accessibility.

• A10 Road Safety Concerns

Concerns were raised regarding safety on the A10, particularly for pedestrians and children walking to school. Residents highlighted the proximity of heavy goods vehicles to pedestrians on narrow sections of the road and questioned whether additional safety measures or traffic restrictions could be introduced.

It was noted that HGVs have a legal right to use the A10 and cannot be diverted elsewhere. The Parish Council acknowledged the concerns and confirmed that measures to address speeding remain a priority, including the use of Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs). Reference was also made to Melbourne Greenway proposals, including improvements to signage and shared-use path safety.

• Update on East West Rail

An update was provided by Councillor Peace Gould following recent meetings between parish councils and East West Rail. It was noted that the information shared by East West Rail was a presentation rather than a consultation and largely reflected existing proposals. The primary objective for East West Rail remains delivery of the route to Cambridge as soon as possible.

Concerns were raised by a resident about the impact of the proposals on local routes, including the loss of Station Road, and ongoing discussions with neighbouring parishes are taking place to seek improvements or reinstatement where possible. While alternative options have been suggested, there is limited optimism that significant changes will be agreed.

It was reported that progress is dependent on an upcoming financial review and the development consent process, both of which have been delayed. These delays are expected to push the overall timetable back rather than shorten consultation periods.

The meeting closed at 8.04pm

Dated: _____

Signed by the chairman: _____