

Items relating to the agenda for PC meeting on Monday 30 November 2015

Item 3 – minutes –circulated by email

Item 4 – matters arising

Item 5 – Public open session

Item 6 – Update regarding Grant Palmer bus service

We have received a response from Grant Palmer and awaiting a response from Beds BC. Edward might be able to provide us with a verbal report at the meeting if the Borough have contacted him direct.

Item 7 – to receive a report from the NDP group and consider any recommendations

Verbal report from Ann Gibbons (John E is on holiday)

Item 8– Planning

Report attached

No new planning applications to consider

Item 9 – To consider a response to Bedford Borough Council consultations on:

- (i) Local Plan 2032
- (ii) Council tax support grants
- (iii) Rural Grants

Local Plan

The assessed level of housing need to 2032 is now 17,367 dwellings. However, taking account of the number of new dwellings already planned or completed since 2012 (the start of the plan period), the local plan needs to find sites for **at least 4,521** dwellings. In addition, employment growth will be required in balance with the housing growth.

The consultation is regarding the methodology and soundness of the plan i.e. how the scoring for each village has been awarded and the Borough's ideas for future planning which largely affects Clapham, Kempston, Great Denham and Land North of Bromham Road. Bletsoe is categorised as a group 3 village with a defined SPA – the Borough would expect between 10-20 dwellings to be delivered in Bletsoe although the scale of development in individual villages and its contribution to meeting the borough's development requirement will be related to development opportunities. It will be dependent upon the form, character and setting of the village and its proximity to larger villages and their services.

(ii) Council tax support grants

When local authorities had to change the way that people receive council tax relief, benefit support grants were given by Central Government to local authorities. They were intended to make up the shortfall received by local authorities. The grants were awarded 3 years ago and the Borough are now proposing to phase out the council tax grants completely over the next 2 years. In the financial year 2015-16 Bletsoe received total income of £13,080 for the financial year which was made up from £756 council tax support grant and £12,324 Precept.

For 2016-17 Bletsoe will receive £234 council tax support grant

For 2017- 18 this will then reduce by 50% to £117

2018 -19 phased out – no funding available. We will still of course be able to raise revenue via our Precept. Further details can be found on the link below:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s29835/Item%20of%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Reduction%20Scheme.pdf>

(iii) Rural Grants

The Council has provided financial assistance to rural organisations, including parish councils, with capital projects for a number of years. Applications for assistance are considered by the Rural Grants Committee and awards made in accordance with agreed guidelines. The maximum amount of any award is normally limited to £25,000 and organisations are generally required to supplement the grant funding with funding from other sources. **It is proposed** to establish a reserve of £400,000 to provide ongoing funding for the Rural Grant scheme. Funding will be released from the reserve as required to meet the demand for Rural Grants **up to a maximum of £100,000 in any single financial year**. This will enable the direct revenue funding of £100,000 per year to be discontinued whilst still providing on-going funding for a minimum of four years. The current criteria for awards were last reviewed in 2009 and, therefore, it is considered an appropriate time for the criteria to be reviewed by the Rural Grants Committee. In undertaking a review the Committee will consult with rural organisations and will seek to ensure the criteria support the financial sustainability of Scheme taking into account the Council's current financial outlook.

Full details can be found on the link below:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s29818/Item%206.3%20-%20CEXC%20-%20Review%20of%20Rural%20Grants.pdf>

Item 10 – to approve the calendar of meetings for 2016

The meeting dates have been set for the third Monday of the month and there are no meetings in August or December.

Item 11 – Financial Matters

- (i) approve accounts for payment – written report circulated
- (ii) annual spend against budget – written report circulated
- (iii) ward funding – any suggestions for this – total amount probably circa £2K. One suggestion is for an outdoor green gym – rough costs would be £5K for 4 pieces of equipment (Brickhill have just received quotes for a similar project so I have used this as a starting point). Any other ideas?

Village Hall – it is my understanding that the village hall will stagger the improvement works and pay for the first stage of the work using their own funds. As the work progresses then quotes will be obtained and grants/financial assistance applied for. I have passed the details of two more grant schemes to the village hall committee.

Item 12 – Clerk's report

The NDP group have suggested the parish put forward the Old Parish Field at the rear of Captains Close which is currently used for grazing as part of the Boroughs call for sites. I have contacted Woodfine Solicitors to request a copy of the deed and details of the trust. If the land has been put into a charitable trust then the parish council can still go ahead and sell the land but the parish council could not receive the money – it would need to remain in charity and therefore passed to another charitable organisation. I am hopeful that the trust is not a charitable trust in which case the parish council could receive the funds and this could be used for the benefit of the parish.

Mobile Post Office will start in Bletsoe on 10th December details have been sent out to every household. Hopefully this service will prove a success.

Gate at Old Way – Chris Horne will undertake this work during the winter months and will contact Cllr Caves re collection of gate and fixings.

Wooden Bus Shelter – a local contractor has met with Ann and agreed to undertake the repairs.

Both projects will be carried out in this financial year.

Next year's budget – if anyone has any proposals that will alter next year's budget please can you raise them at the November meeting.

There are no other items for consideration which are not included elsewhere within the agenda as part of the Clerk's report

Item 13 – Parish Concerns

Item 14 – Date of next meeting

Monday 18th January 2016 at 7:30pm

A Southern

27th November 2015