

Minutes of meeting of Bletsoe Parish Council held on Monday 6th November 2017 at the Village Hall, Memorial Lane, Bletsoe

Present:

Present: Ann Gibbons (Chairman), Mary Laws, Alison Foster, Paul Caves, Clare Goduti, Paul Vine, and the Clerk. There were also 5 members of the public.

Prior to the meeting Cllr Gibbons paid a personal tribute to Cllr Edward Bean who had recently passed away. Edward had given many years' service to a wide range of local organisations, including the Parish Council. We shall all miss his valuable input and wealth of knowledge of all things relating to Bletsoe.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Borough Cllr Martin Towler.

2. Declarations of Interest

All members declared a local interest in matters relating to the NDP and matters relating to the Old Parish Field. However, dispensations have been granted to all members (except Cllrs Vine & Goduti) who therefore have the right to speak and vote on this item. All members also declared a local interest in matters relating to the Waiting for the Sun similarly dispensations have been granted to all members (except Cllrs Vine & Goduti) who therefore have the right to speak and vote on this item.

Cllrs Foster & Laws declared a local and disclosable pecuniary interest regarding item 6 – and part of item 12 all matters relating to the NDP

Cllr Vine declared a local interest regarding items 8 and possibly item 9 – matters relating to the Lady Smockers proposal.

3. To approve the minutes of previous meeting held on Monday 4th September

It was resolved to approve the minutes.

Clerk

4. Matters arising from minutes

BpHA parking area adjacent to property on corner of Memorial Lane and The Avenue.

Cllrs Vine and Laws had recently undertaken a site visit with Greg Cox from BpHA. Mr Cox has agreed to look at costings to lower the ground and tarmacing for 2 cars. If this is not viable then perhaps there might be an option to transfer the land to the Parish Council.

M Laws

Matters in Progress

Cllr Vine reported that he had attended the Annual meeting of Bedfordshire Police which was attended by the Police Commissioner and our local PC. Bedfordshire Police need to recruit more police officers but currently there is a £10 million shortfall in its budget. The authority has requested additional funding, and this has been escalated to Central Government for consideration. The next meeting for North Bedfordshire will be held on the 15th November 2017 when the local priorities for the next 3 months will be agreed. Parish Council members agreed that the top 2 priorities for Bletsoe should be speeding and visible policing.

P Vine

Main gate to the playing field – the posts need re-setting. *Cllr Caves agreed to carry out this work.*

P Caves

It was reported that Cllr Gibbons has now removed the old parish council paperwork from the St John Chapel - past minutes have been passed to Bedford Borough Council archives department. It was noted that there is no requirement to retain financial information longer than 6 years. All minutes and agendas since 2012/13 are retained on the parish council's laptop and uploaded to the website.

5. **Public Open Session**

There were no questions from the public.

6. **NDP – to receive an update and to approve funding to complete the plan**

Prior to the meeting Cllr Gibbons had circulated correspondence regarding advice received from Woods Hardwick. Originally Bedford Borough Council said it was not necessary to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) but Historic England have said we should, due to the inclusion of site 685. Woods Hardwick have quoted £2500 + VAT to re-work the plan to include an update of the site assessment document, liaison with Historic England and Bedford Borough Council to comply with Historic England’s advice. If further work is required, the parish council would need to apply for a grant – currently there is a limited amount of funding available for technical expertise for up to a maximum of £6K subject to certain criteria being met.

Members raised concern regarding the inconsistency of the RAG rating of sites and whether this might have been the reason why Historic England have now raised concerns regarding site 685. Members were concerned that mistakes had been made regarding the scoring for the sites and that the parish council were now being asked to pay additional fees due to errors earlier in the process that could have been avoided. Cllr Gibbons agreed to talk with Woods Hardwick regarding the parish councils concerns over the scoring of the sites. Cllr Vine proposed that if the parish council was eligible for a grant it would be beneficial to go for a full assessment. If the Parish Council spent £2,500 Historic England might still object and a full assessment would be required. **It was resolved** to apply to Locality for the maximum grant available (£6K.) It was noted that could lead to a delay in completing the NDP, but members agreed this was their preferred option.

A Gibbons

Clerk/Ann Gibbons

7. **Old Parish Field – grazing request**

It was noted that Sarah Barker the current tenant has vacated the field and is not looking to renew her agreement next year. Mr Morris has approached the Parish Council asking to rent the field for grazing. It was noted that Cllr Vine had been approached by a local resident who wanted to use some of the field for parking. The field is approx. 2.2 acres and has no water supply. Members agreed to continue to rent the field for grazing. However, members felt that anyone interested in renting the field should be given the opportunity to contact the Parish Council and be considered. Cllr Laws proposed an increase in the rent and **it was resolved** to set the rent at £20.00 per week. A notice would be displayed on the notice boards and the parish website informing residents that the field was available to rent at a commercial rent. Members agreed that the new agreement should run in line with the financial year i.e. from 1/4/18 and be offered on a 2-yearly basis.

Clerk

It was resolved to place an advert on the notice boards and website that the field was available to rent.

Ann Gibbons

8. **Lady Smockers**

Costings regarding a proposal to purchase a lawn mower and to erect a shed had already been circulated and considered at the September meeting. The clerk confirmed the Parish Council had received £5900 in CiL funding received from Bedford Borough Council and provided information on what this funding could be spent on.

In monetary terms members were happy with the proposal but there remained some concern about the feasibility of relying on volunteers. Cllr Vine reported that the mower

mulches the grass and is very simple to operate taking approximately 4hrs to cut the field. Members agreed that any proposal to fund the mower would need to include a proviso that the orchard would also be cut by the Lady Smockers. Members voted in favour of funding the mower using CiL Funds.

The lawnmower would go on the parish council’s asset register and be insured by the Parish Council and all volunteers would need to be trained in its use and use the appropriate safety protection i.e. ear defenders, safety goggles.

P Vine

9. **Allotments**

The clerk reported that the parish council had received 10 letters from residents who would like the Parish Council to provide land for allotments. The council must decide if this demonstrates sufficient demand and if so whether it has land that is both suitable and available for this purpose.

Members considered which land was in their ownership and whether it was suitable for allotments. The Old Parish Field would not be suitable as this is currently used for grazing. It is also one of the sites included in the NDP which could be developed in the future. The Old Memorial Garden was not large enough nor was it suitable as this was in the centre of the parish and an important part of the street-scene within the conservation area. The Orchard again was not large enough and the site slopes quite steeply and therefore not suitable. The Playing Field could be utilised and in the far corner near Coplowe Lane there is a water supply. **It was resolved** that members would undertake a site visit to agree exactly where the allotments could be located. Members agreed to only offer 10 half plots (10m x 10m). The clerk would need to put a planning application into the local authority as this was a change of use and because the site is adjacent to the conservation area and near to the Historic Monument. Members would also need to decide on the terms of the tenancy agreement, rents, regulations etc. This would be considered if planning permission is granted. The clerk would contact the allotment association and inform them of the situation as it could be several months before planning permission is granted and the land is available to rent.

Clerk

10. **Speeding on Bourne End Lane – Mary**

Cllr Laws gave a verbal report regarding this item. There had been a couple of near misses between pedestrians and motorists along Bourne End Lane. It appears that many motorists are being directed off the A6 onto Bourne End Lane by their sat nav devices and they do not realise they are entering a built-up area with houses and pedestrians so close to the A6. The parish council agreed to support Cllr Laws in her complaint to Beds BC Highways and would write to the highways team.

Clerk

11. **To adopt the calendar of meetings for 2018**

It was resolved to approve the calendar of meetings but to reschedule the May meeting which would now be held on Wednesday 16th May.

Clerk

12. **Planning - to note the report and consider any new applications:**

Planning application – Waiting for the Sun site

Whilst members were not in favour of any development of this site they were mindful that any objection had to be on valid planning grounds. Cllr Foster suggested meeting with the planning department to clarify what the grounds for objection are. Mr Baker offered to draft questions to bring to the meeting with the Borough. Once the meeting has taken place Cllr Foster and Mr Baker will liaise with the clerk if a letter of objection is required.

A Foster
D Baker

There were no comments on the application for Gilbert Cottage.

(ii) *Meeting with Mayor and town and parish councils regarding the A6 developments*
 Cllr Foster reported back on tonight’s meeting held at Borough Hall. At the moment all of the large developments are under consideration. The mayor accepted that neither Twinwoods nor Thurleigh provide sufficient infrastructure to deal with highways issues. The Wyboston option is one of the preferred options but there is concern about the realignment of the A1 because progress on this project has stalled. Members were urged to respond to the Borough consultation and to support the option to include a larger development at Wyboston which would have better transport links and not generate additional demand on the A6.

ALL

This item would be added to matters in progress for consideration at the January meeting.

Clerk

13. **Financial Matters**

1) **To approve the accounts for payment**

Ch No	Payee	£	Description of services
1467	RBL Poppy Appeal	17.00	Civic Wreath
1468	BDO Stoy LLP	240.00	External Auditor fee
1469	EoN	71.82	Lighting maintenance fee
1470	Viking direct	93.30	Stationery, stamps, toners
1471	A Southern	37.00	Working from home allowance Oct-Dec
1472	ICO	35.00	ICO registration fee (Data protection)
	TOTAL	494.12	

Clerk

It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment. In addition, **it was resolved** to approve a further payment for £42.71 payable to A Gibbons for print cartridges, paper and field gate keys, £10 to Bletsoe Village Hall fund for hall hire and £10.00 to SLCC Bedfordshire Branch for Data Protection training for the Clerk.

2) **To note the spend against budget for the year to date**

The report was noted

Clerk

Bank Mandate – **it was resolved** to add Cllrs Vine and Goduti to the bank mandate and remove Cllr Bean. In addition, members agreed in principle that the Parish Council could use online banking. Accounts for payment would still be submitted for approval at parish council meetings but would be paid by BACS and not by cheque.

12 **To note the Clerk’s report**

38 The Avenue – members resolved not to object to the sale of the property and its garage and the Clerk would contact RBD Solicitors to confirm.

There were no other matters for consideration.

13 **Parish Concerns**

Fly tipping outside no 5 St Mary’s Close – this would be reported to BpHA.

Clerk

Coplowe Lane passing places on the right-hand side approximately half way along –

there are very deep holes in the layby's which could cause serious damage to a car or injury to a horse if it stumbled on this section of highway. This would be reported to highways.

Clerk

The phone box on The Avenue has not been in use for several years – can we ask BT to remove it?

Clerk

The 30mph road signage on The Avenue near the A6 is obscured by vegetation. Mr Morris volunteered to cut this back and members thanked him for offering to carry out the work.

Mr Morris

Ditch on corner of Bourne End Lane and the A6 is once again full of smelly water – this matter was raised a few years ago and the Borough Council investigated this – it is believed that waste water from one of the properties is being discharged directly into the ditch. **It was resolved** to report the matter to the Borough Council.

Clerk

Cllr Vine offered to cut the hedge around the Orchard – members thanked Cllr Vine for offering to undertake this work.

P Vine

Cllr Laws requested a small donation to purchase Christmas lights for the Orchard. Members agreed a maximum amount of £150.00 for Christmas lights.

A Gibbons

15 **Date of next meeting – Monday 8th January 2018**

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Approved by Chairman 8th January 2018