

**Minutes of Meeting of Bletsoe Parish Council held on Monday 20 January 2014 at the Village Hall, Memorial Lane, Bletsoe**

**Present:**

Cllrs Ann Gibbons (Chairman), Edward Bean, Paul Caves, Matt Cox, Alison Field-Foster, Mary Laws, and the Clerk were in attendance. There were no members of the public.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

None

**2. Declarations of interest**

All members declared an interest in matters relating to the Waiting to the Sun planning application item however dispensations have been granted to all members who therefore have the right to speak and vote on this item.

**3. To approve the minutes of previous meeting held on 4 November 2013**

**It was resolved** to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

**4. Matters Arising**

It was reported that a meeting had taken place between Cllrs Caves, Clifton and Andy Prigmore from Bedford Borough Council at the Bletsoe crossroads. It was agreed to place the existing road signs on larger background signs (yellow background). In addition rumble strips would be laid during the Spring which should slow down motorists as they approach the crossroads.

**5. Public Open Session**

There were no questions from the public.

**6. Borough Ward Funding**

Cllr Clifton had offered £1K from his ward funding to be spent in Bletsoe. Members discussed whether they could use the money to pay for large planters which would be placed along The Avenue. The planters would narrow the road which would slow down traffic approaching the village. There was concern the parish council would not be permitted to install these on the Highway and clarification was needed from Highways. As the ward funds needed to be allocated this financial year **it was resolved** not to purchase the Planters using ward funding but to pursue this as part of traffic calming measures and report back at the next council meeting. Members then discussed purchasing picnic tables for the playing field. All present felt this would be a good use of the funds and **it was resolved** to obtain quotes for the purchase of picnic tables (up to a maximum spend of £1K) and submit these to the Borough for payment.

E Bean

Clerk

**7. Update on Gypsy & Traveller Site Appeal**

The planning appeal had run for 2 days already. There were two days this week (Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January) with a further 2 days planned for February. Once the appeal has been heard the inspectors recommendations will be presented to the Secretary of State and a decision made approximately 6/8 weeks afterwards.

Cllr Laws joined the meeting

**8 Update regarding the Neighbourhood Development Plan**

A successful funding application had been made with £6K awarded. The next stage will be for the group to meet with the consultant to start the process. The group are also able to access professional assistance from Martin Tidy at Bedford Borough Council. Ideally the group could do with a few more members and a consultation meeting with all residents will need to be arranged. A joint meeting hosted by Bletsoe had taken place with Thurleigh, Milton Ernest and Clapham. **It was resolved** that the cost of the hall hire for this meeting would be met by Bletsoe Parish Council.

Clerk

The Chairman and the Clerk had recently attended a planning workshop at Bedford Borough Council and it was announced that the Borough would be producing a new Local Plan to 2032. The first stage of the process would be a consultation which would run for 6 weeks. However, parish representatives explained that this was not sufficient time to consult with their residents and that some parishes only meet bi-monthly so the timing of the next meeting would not fit in with the consultation deadline. Officers from the Borough agreed that they would allow individual parishes an extension of time to submit their responses provided they are kept informed.

Members were advised that there are several drop-in sessions taking place throughout the Borough and Planning Officers would be available to discuss aspects of the Local Plan. Details could be found on the Borough website at [www.bedford.gov.uk/environmentandplanning](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environmentandplanning) Members offered to attend the event at Sharnbrook Village Hall on Tuesday 28th Jan 7pm-9.30pm. Details would also be circulated to Jamie Hassalls and Paul Laws who may also wish to attend.

Members agreed to read through the draft plan and a meeting will be called to draft a response. The Clerk would contact the Planning department to advise it would respond after the March parish council meeting.

**9 Planning – to note the report and consider any new applications**

Cllr Foster joined the meeting.

The report was noted and members considered application number 13/02524/COU for Hollow Farm, Rushden Road, Milton Ernest. Members expressed concern regarding the change of use from an agricultural building to storage and distribution. The change of use would ultimately cause an increase in traffic particularly HGV lorries and the proposed development is outside the permitted area for development in the current Local Plan. Ultimately a change of use would provide employment opportunities yet this land is designated agricultural land and should remain so and **it was resolved** to write to the Borough to object to this application on these grounds. Members were also encouraged to write as individuals to object to the application.

Clerk

**10 Rural Broadband**

It was reported that Bletsoe would not benefit from the Bedford Borough broadband upgrade to fibre. This was disappointing news particularly as

the fibre will be delivered to Sharnbrook and will literally pass by Bletsoe along the A6. Cllr Bean had been in contact with Paul Vann at the Borough and will also contact BT wholesale department and Alastair Burt to apply pressure for the parish to receive a better broadband service. Members were also advised that “Microwave Broadband” could be an option to consider should the parish be unsuccessful in upgrading to Fibre Broadband in the near future. Another option to consider could be my Eee which is a mobile telephone broadband service.

**11 Parish Council Vacancy**

Whilst there had been some interest in the vacancy at the present time due to work commitments there were no candidates. As the council only has 1 vacancy it was felt that the vacancy could remain for a few months but this would need to be actioned prior to November 2014 as May 2015 would be an election year and co-options could not take place with less than 6 months time to local elections.

**12 Financial Matters**

**(i) to approve the accounts for payment**

**It was resolved:** to approve the accounts for payment.

Ch No	Payee	£	Description
1252	EoN	71.82	Street lighting maintenace
1253	Chris Horne Gardens	324.00	Hedge cutting
1254	A Southern	68.20	Working from home allowance & mileage costs
1255	Bletsoe Village Hall	10.00	Hall Hire Jan 2014
1256	Jack Smyth	1800.00	Legal Fees (G&T appeal)
1257	Chris Horne Gardens	201.60	Grass cutting
1258	Viking	127.59	Stamps, paper, toner, envelopes, pens
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2603.21</b>	

**(ii) To note the annual spend against budget**

The annual spend against budget was noted.

**(iii) Budget for 2014/15**

A draft budget had been circulated. All members approved the draft budget and **it was resolved** to set the budget for 2014/15 at £8280

**(iv) Precept for 2014/15**

Members considered the level of the Precept and future projects which might require additional funding (the NDP), broadband, possible legal fees

in the future. **It was resolved** to request the same level of Precept for 2014/15 which would be a total income of **£13,080** comprising £12,324 Borough Precept request and £756 Council Tax Support Grant.

Clerk

**13 To note the Clerk’s Report and approve dates of Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council**

The report was noted. **It was resolved** to hold the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May**.

Clerk

**14 Parish Concerns**

Coplowe Lane – verges in extremely poor condition and more passing places were necessary. There had been a road traffic incident recently which had resulted in a large volume of traffic being re-directed through Coplowe Lane and most likely this has caused the excessive damage. At the moment there are no additional funds available from Highways for improvements/repairs this financial year but Cllr Bean offered to speak with Alastair Rundall to see if the potholes could be repaired. **This item would be on the agenda for the next meeting.**

E Bean

It was reported that 2 cars had recently been damaged by the large stones which were placed alongside the roadway adjacent to a property on Coplowe Lane. Whilst it was accepted this was a highways issue members proposed that the Clerk write to the owner and work to find an alternative solution perhaps some taller posts which would be more visible to drivers? The Clerk would report back at the next meeting.

Clerk

Path between Bourne End and Sharnbrook had been cleared by Highways. The potholes have been reported to Alastair Rundall and the hedge on the path near Bourne End is now encroaching on the footpath and needs cutting back. Cllr Gibbons asked whether the hedge could be cut back by volunteers. **It was resolved** that Cllr Gibbons would arrange for this work to be carried out by volunteers.

A Gibbons

Road signage – as discussed at the November meeting it was agreed there were too many unnecessary signs in the parish. The effect of this highlighted the location of Bletsoe and added to motorists using Coplowe Lane as a shortcut. In addition there were at least 10 cycleway signs which were not required. Cllr Bean would report discuss their removal with Highways and report back at next meeting.

Bus timetable cabinet – a new one had been supplied by Bedford Borough Council and it was proposed to install this where the bus actually stops outside the Church. (E Bean to confirm)

Bus Timetable – the current timetable is due for revision. The timing of the services to and from Bletsoe at the moment is not satisfactory with large gaps in the service and the first and last buses do not reflect the needs of the clients. Cllr Bean offered to speak with Chris Pettifer at Bedford Borough Council and report back at the next parish council meeting.

Village Agents – questionnaire given out to members of parish council and will be distributed to residents.

BCAB – best value energy after Tuesday tea shop on 21<sup>st</sup> January.

Land Registry application to register the path adjacent to the Memorial Garden. Cllr Gibbons offered to speak with the owners of no 6 Top Row prior to the council formally submitting an application to register this pathway as parish land.

A Gibbons

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**Date of Next Meeting** – Monday 17 March 2014 at 7.30pm

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Approved by Chairman 17 March 2014