

**Minutes of Annual Meeting of Bletsoe Parish Council held on Thursday 21 May 2015 at the Village Hall, Memorial Lane, Bletsoe**

**Present:**

Present: Ann Gibbons (Chairman), Edward Bean, Paul Caves, John Economides, Alison Field-Foster, Mary Laws and the Clerk. There were also 11 members of the public present.

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| <p>1. <b>Election of Chairman</b><br/>Cllr Foster nominated Cllr Gibbons. Cllr Gibbons accepted the position of Chairman.</p>  |                    |
| <p>2. <b>Declaration of acceptance of office of Chairman</b><br/>Cllr Gibbons signed her declaration of acceptance of office.</p>  |                    |
| <p>3. <b>Declaration of acceptance of office for remaining parish councillors</b><br/>All remaining councillors signed their declaration of acceptance of office</p>   |                    |
| <p>4. <b>To consider co-option of any interested parties</b><br/>The Chairman reported that she had spoken with two interested parties for the one remaining vacancy. <b>It was resolved</b> to ask for a brief personal statement for members to consider and an additional meeting would be called so that the co-option could take place as soon as possible.</p>   | Chairman<br>Clerk  |
| <p>5. <b>To consider any requests for dispensations</b><br/>Members of the council had submitted requests for dispensations relating to the G&amp;T site known as the Waiting for the Sun. The Clerk had issued dispensations to all councillors. Members would still be required to declare their interests at the beginning of every meeting but would be permitted to speak and vote on any matter relating to the site. The dispensations would remain in place until the next council elections in 2019.</p>  | All                |
| <p>6. <b>Apologies for absence</b><br/>There were no apologies.</p>  |                    |
| <p>7. <b>Declarations of Interest</b><br/>All members declared an interest in matters relating to the Waiting to the Sun planning application item however dispensations have been granted to these members who therefore have the right to speak and vote on this item.<br/>Cllr Laws declared a local and pecuniary interest in Item 15.</p>   |                    |
| <p>8. <b>To approve the minutes of previous meeting held on 20th April 2015</b><br/><b>It was resolved</b> to accept the minutes as a true record of the meeting.</p>  |                    |
| <p>9. <b>Matters Arising</b><br/>Mobile Post Office – the Clerk was waiting for the local post office who are the operators of the service to contact her.<br/>Defibrillator for the Village Hall – currently the Fire Service are waiting for the final parts. They will contact the clerk when the unit is ready for collection and installation.<br/>There were no other matters which are not included elsewhere on the agenda.</p>  | Clerk<br><br>Clerk |
| <p>10. <b>Public Open Session</b><br/>Who is on the NDP group? Cllrs Foster, Caves, Economides (Chairman) and Gibbons.</p> <p>There was concern that the NDP had identified a possible site for development which is adjacent to the Waiting for the Sun site. This could completely undermine all the work that has been carried out to date to protect the parish from this illegal encampment. If the NDP supports this site then BRA would not challenge or support any further appeals regarding the G&amp;T site.<br/>Cllr Economides responded that two more consultations will take place as part of the NDP process and therefore not all the sites may be approved by the village.</p> |                    |

This site has been selected when it is outside the village envelope and should be protected from development in favour of other sites which are more favourable. Cllr Economides responded that the plan had been submitted to all residents and these sites had evolved through the responses received in the questionnaires. The NDP group do not choose the sites the residents of the parish do.

Why haven't residents been kept informed about the Waiting for the Sun site – it all seems to have gone quiet? Cllr Gibbons responded that there is a quarterly newsletter delivered to all residents that keeps residents abreast of local issues including details of the Waiting for the Sun site appeal scheduled for July 2015. Cllr Economides re-iterated that the planning application for no 8 The Avenue and the NDP are two separate issues. The group would be more than happy to hold back with the NDP until after the G&T appeal. The plan is not due to be published until a much later date and certainly much later than the G&T appeal.

The call for sites – when will be a decision be made? Cllr Gibbons responded that the call for sites was a Borough initiative as part of the new Local Plan for 2021-32 and this decision is made by the Borough not the parish. Cllr Economides re-iterated that the NDP could be halted if this is what residents wanted.

Why doesn't the parish council submit two planning applications for land owned by the parish. One on the playing field and one of the village field this would release money for the parish and also prevent development on land which is outside the village envelope?

There were no further questions and **it was resolved** to bring item 15 (Planning) forward on the agenda as all the members of the public were interested in this item.

#### 11. **Planning**

Cllr Laws had already declared a local and pecuniary interest in this agenda item. However, she is permitted to answer any questions relating specifically to her planning application.

Why was the site put forward so early does she not perceive this could be a problem for the parish due to its proximity to the G& T site? The chairman reminded members of the public that any questions must relate to the details of the application itself and not general questions about the location of the development, the NDP or her views on why she submitted the application as that was a personal matter. Members were also advised that any response it makes to the application must be based on the local planning framework as it currently stands.

Cllr Laws left the meeting.

Members were asked if they had all seen and reviewed the application for no 8 The Avenue and what their views were?

Members felt the application was premature as no decision has been made by the Borough in relation to its call for sites which for for the 2021-32 Local Plan. In addition this application would result in over development of the site. There was no need for this size of housing in the parish and the application is for 12 houses which would trigger the need for up to 30% social housing. Bletsoe already has a high proportion of social housing and there is no need for any more at present. Policy CP12 provides a housing requirement for the Rural Policy area over the period of the Local Plan which has already been exceeded. The scale of the proposal is disproportionate in relation to the size of the village. The village comprises about 100

properties, meaning that this proposal would result in an increase of 12% representing a major development for the village. **It was resolved** to object to the application based on the above points and the clerk would circulate the letter of objection prior to submission. She had been granted an extension until Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>.  
At the point in the meeting several members of the public left and Cllr Laws was invited to re-join the meeting.

Clerk

12. **To allocate areas of responsibility within the Parish Council**

Cllrs Foster and Gibbons nominated Cllrs Caves as Vice Chairman and he accepted the position

Town and Parish Network – Cllr Foster although all members would be circulated the agenda and could attend

Play Area – Cllr Caves

Street Furniture – Cllr Bean

Notice boards – Cllr Laws

Highways – Cllr Caves

Village Hall Representative – Cllr Gibbons

Finance – Cllr Economides

Transport – Cllr Bean

Planning committee chairman – this role was no longer required as the parish council meet more frequently and if necessary an additional parish meeting can be called to deal with an urgent planning application. Cllr Laws was thanked for her work as Chairman of the Planning group.

13. **To consider advice regarding tree works for the Parish Field**

**It was resolved** to approve the tree works for the parish field which would result in the felling and removal of two small sycamore trees and one field maple.

Clerk

14. **To approve the revised standing orders**

**It was resolved** to adopt the revisions to the standing orders

15. **To note the yearly play inspection and approve any recommendations**

What does the EN reference mean? The clerk was asked to contact Solutions for Playgrounds for clarification. **It was resolved** to remove the goal nets with immediate effect as this was an item that have been raised in the previous year's inspection. Any items that required rubbing down and repainting could be done by volunteers. Possibly an event could take place one Saturday morning where volunteers could come along and help. **It was resolved** to ask Solutions for Playgrounds to provide a quote for breaking out the firemans pole and re-installing it. Cllr Caves was happy to replace the worn out swing seats and chains but would await confirmation from the clerk regarding the EN safety reference. The clerk was also asked to check what type of paint could be used on the equipment

Clerk

P Caves

P Caves

Clerk

16. **To receive an update regarding the Neighbourhood Development Plan**

There had been no meetings since the April meeting and there was nothing further to report at this time. There was still a need to co-opt more members onto the group. **Lance Feaver offered to join the group.** The chairman had received correspondence from the St Modwen group who are interested in our NDP and passed this information onto Cllr Economides.

17. **Financial Matters:**

(i) To approve the insurance renewal premium with Aviva  
**It was resolved** to accept the annual renewal

(ii) Accounts for Payment - **it was resolved** to approve the accounts for payment.

Clerk

Ch No	Payee	£	Description
1322	A Southern	37.00	Working from home allowance
1323	BATPC	88.00	Affiliation fees
1324	Broker Network Ltd	694.33	Annual Insurance
1325	Bletsoe Village Hall Fund	10.00	Village hall hire for May
1326	Chris Horne Gardens Ltd	489.60	Grass cutting March-April
1327	Solutions 4 Playgrounds	180.00	Annual Play Inspection
1328	Solutions 4 Playgrounds	1110.00	Installation of new play equipment
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2608.93</b>	

Clerk

(ii) To note the annual spend against budget  
 The spend was noted – there were no items not included within the budget and everything was as it would be expected at this stage in the financial year

(iii) To approve the amendments to the Bank Mandate  
**It was resolved** to remove Matt Cox and add John Economides to the mandate.

Clerk

(iv) To approve the Annual Return for 2014-15  
**It was resolved** to approve the Annual Return

Clerk

(v) To approve the Statement of Governance for 2014-15  
**It was resolved** to approve the statement of governance

Clerk

(vi) To note the Internal Auditors report for 2014-15  
**It was resolved** to accept the report, the clerk reported that the website already included items which would be required as part of next year's Annual Audit

(vii) Review of risk assessment including effectiveness of internal audit procedure  
 Members reviewed the current risk assessment and confirmed they were happy with the existing arrangements and processes and checks carried out by the internal auditor. This would be further strengthened by carrying out 2 x yearly reviews of the cash books, bank statements and accounts for payments by Cllr Economides.

All

Cllr Economides

18. **Clerk's report**

The report was noted. There were no items not included elsewhere on the agenda requiring action.

19. **Parish Concerns**

Cllr Beans reported the PCC had trimmed the trees in the churchyard which were overhanging the highway.

Some trees had been cut down recently on the land at the Waiting for the Sun site

and the clerk was aware and had contacted planning enforcement. The land is not within the conservation area and the trees did not have TPO's so there had been no breach of planning.

There are some old National Lottery signs on the play area which are no longer legally required. Can these be removed? **It was resolved** to remove the signs.

E Bean

Cllr Economides asked about the bus service. Cllr Bean has spoken with the bus company (Grant Palmer) and asked for this to be included on the agenda for July. Cllr Foster advised that the owner of Grant Palmer had been contacted by the Borough and he had spoken to his drivers regarding speeding.

Cllr Caves reported that a resident had complained about the condition of Bourne End Lane and had been advised to ring the highways help desk to report.

It was suggested that the clerk contact the new Borough Councillor Martin Towler and ask him to take this matter up with the Borough.

Clerk

Cllr Laws reported an overflowing ditch/drain at the corner of the A6 and Bourne End Lane on the opposite side to the notice board. The clerk would report to Andy Prigmore.

Clerk

Orchard hedgerow – do we want to get this cut twice yearly which would make the job much easier? Members felt that due the time restrictions the cuts would need to be carried out quite close together and therefore there was no advantage in paying for an additional cut.

Old Way Gate – Cllr Caves would install the new gate.

P Caves

The lottery funded bells project has now reached the point where the restored bells are back in use and the community outreach project will start later this year. The Old Chancel restoration appeal has been launched needing to raise approximately £250,000 and with a target of £70,000 pledges from villagers and local people. A formal report will be sent to the Parish Council prior to submission of major grant applications. The project is currently awaiting the various permissions required from the Diocese of St Albans, conservation bodies and Bedford Borough Council based on agreed plans including a new external lobby to the church building.

The village hall committee had not been successful with its application to Biffa for the refurbishment plans although they could re-apply after 6 months. Cllr Foster suggested they apply for a Rural Grant through the Borough Council.

Have all the dog fouling notices been put up yet as there isn't a sign on both sides of the village hall before you enter the field? They have all been installed – if necessary we would purchase an additional sign but this would be considered at a future date.

20. **Date of next meeting Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2015**

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Approved by Chairman 20th July 2015