

**Minutes of Meeting of Bletsoe Parish Council held on Monday 28th September 2015 at the Village Hall, Memorial Lane, Bletsoe**

**Present:**

Present: Ann Gibbons (Chairman), Edward Bean, John Economides, Alison Foster, Claire Woodward and the Clerk. There were also 2 members of the public present and Borough Cllr Martin Towler.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Paul Caves and Mary Laws – **it was resolved** to accept the apologies for absence

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 these members who therefore have the right to speak and vote on this item.

3. **To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July**

**It was resolved** to accept the minutes with a minor amendment to reflect that Cllr Foster had sent her apologies for this meeting.

4. Cllr Foster joined the meeting

**Matters Arising**

There were no matters not covered elsewhere within the agenda.

5. **Public Open Session**

The cottages on Top Row are currently being re-thatched. This has been a collaborative project paid for by the owners to ensure the same thatch is used over all the roofs. These properties are an important part of the heritage of Bletsoe and perhaps the parish council might wish to thank the owners for getting the work done simultaneously.

Clerk

Permissive rights of way – the agreement in place for access across land owned by Mr Knights will finish at the end of 2016. Would the parish council be willing to approach Mr Knights to see if an agreement can be made for this arrangement to continue.? If the parish council do they would need to consider what costs would be incurred i.e. maintenance of the paths, liability etc.

Clerk

6. **Update regarding the Grant Palmer bus service**

Cllr Bean reported that he had been monitoring the services and there have been no changes to the timetable and the service appears to be running smoothly. However, the parish council have received two emails of complaint regarding the suitability of Coplowe Lane as a bus route. Coplowe Lane is a narrow country lane with few passing places and this means that buses are unable to reverse should they be required to do so. In addition buses heading past the rectory to turn left into Coplowe Lane must swing wide to take the corner. This makes it especially dangerous for horse riders who meet oncoming buses at this junction. It was reported that drivers leaving Castle Barns feel very unsafe as they are effectively hidden from view and there have been several near misses.

Members discussed what could be done – whilst it recognised the bus route (no 28) provides a vital service to the local community there are real concerns regarding safety for other road users.

**It was resolved** to write to the Borough (Chris Pettifer and Joanne Moore) and copy in Grant Palmer who provide the service. Cllr Bean will then chase this matter up on behalf of the parish council and report back at the next meeting.

In addition the council would ask for some road markings near to the entrance with Castle Barns – SLOW in both directions of Coplowe Lane approaching Castle Barns and perhaps two signs which indicated there was a concealed entrance.

Clerk, Martin Towler

7. **To receive a report from the NDP group**

The group now had two new members Lance Feaver and David Baker. Alison Foster has now asked to re-join the group having taken advice from Bedford Borough Council. The advice from the monitoring officer is that Cllr Foster does not have a “pecuniary” interest although she should declare a “local” interest. The group was unsure whether Cllr Foster should be allowed to re-join the group and sought the advice of the council. Whilst the NDP group does need the support of the parish council who ultimately will submit the Bletsoe NDP to the Borough it is not the decision of the parish council who may or may not join the group. Cllr Foster re-iterated that the NDP group is not a committee of the parish council and that all residents living in Bletsoe are free to join the group and she intends to re-join the group.

The steering group are considering whether the green land surrounding the village is submitted for local green spaces designation. The parish council would need to submit these sites to the Borough Council who will be re-consulting regarding the Local Plan on the 19<sup>th</sup> October. David Baker had produced a report regarding local green spaces. As part of the Local Plan consultation it was suggested that residents should be consulted on the proposal to include these 3 sites as Local Green Spaces. **It was resolved** to email a copy of the paper produced by David Baker to all members of the NDP and the parish council. This would be considered at the November meeting.

JE

AG

Cllr Bean asked for the notes/action points arising from the NDP. **It was resolved** to upload this information onto the parish council website.

There was some concern about putting forward potential development sites owned by members of the parish council. Would it not be better that the group only puts forward sites owned by the PC and then simply lists the other sites but without comment? Members disagreed - the NDP process is very clear that residents should be consulted on all the sites put forward and it will be up to the local residents to vote for their preferred sites. In addition 18% of the houses in Bletsoe are social housing. If the only site for development put forward was the parish council owned Captains Field then 30% of any houses built would need to be social housing. The Borough’s policy is developments of 3 or more houses require an element of social housing. Therefore would it not be better to look at several sites throughout the parish which would only have 2 or less houses built on and therefore no requirement for social housing?

Cllr Towler joined the meeting

Cllr Gibbons asked members whether they were still in favour of continuing with the NDP process? Members were still committed to the process and ultimately the final plan would be put to a referendum to all residents in Bletsoe.

Cllr Gibbons thanked Cllr Economides for his continued hard work as chairman of the NDP group.

8. **Planning**

The report was noted. **It was resolved** to make no comments on the application at North End Barns for the creation of a horse exercise area.

9. **Financial matters**

(i) **It was resolved** to approve the accounts for payment

Ch No	£	Payee	Description
1341	35.00	The villager minibus	S137 towards bus service
1342	3.00	Dominic Mills & Co	Land register fees (NDP)

1343	114.00	SLCC	Training course for the Clerk on Charitable Trusts (8/10/15)
1344	120.00	BDO LLP	External Auditor fee
1345	10.00	Bletsoe Village Hall Fund	Hall Hire September meeting
1346	71.82	EoN	Street lighting maintenance
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>353.82</b>		

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

The report was noted

**(iii) To note the completion of the annual audit for 2014-15**

**It was resolved** to accept the completed annual audit – there were no matters arising from the external auditor.

**10. Clerk’s report**

Mobile Post Office – the post office had contacted the Clerk and advised they were looking into reducing the service in Thurleigh (currently it has 3 visits per week) to accommodate a visit to Bletsoe and also Riseley. Members advised the preferred location would be in the layby on the Avenue. The clerk would keep members updated on any progress.

Tree Warden – currently the parish council does not have a tree warden but Adrian Fett has volunteered for the role. **It was resolved** that Mr Fett should become the tree warden for Bletsoe.

Clerk

**11. Parish Concerns**

Broadband – Bletsoe is not included in the phase commencing 2016 and therefore will not be upgraded until 2018. **It was resolved** to write to Paul Vann at Bedford Borough to ask Mr Brooks from BT Openreach for a cost to connect Bletsoe to the superfast broadband cabinet located at the end of the Avenue on the A6.

Clerk

Ward Funding – please can members think of some ideas for projects costing approximately £2K for the November meeting.

ALL

Litter – it was reported that the Borough council had recently cleared the litter along the A6 near Bletsoe. It was reported that there was litter along Coplowe Lane and the BARCing group would carry out a litter pick in this area.

BARCing group

Wooden Bus Shelter – work is required to repair this. Would the parish council be prepared to fund this work?

Gate at Old Way – will the parish council pay for the replacement gate to be installed?

**It was resolved** to pay for repairs to the wooden bus shelter and also for the new gate at Old Way to be installed.

A Gibbons

**12. Date of next meeting Monday 30th November 2015**

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Approved by Chairman 30th November 2015