

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

Present:

Present: Ann Gibbons (Chairman), Paul Caves, Mary Laws, Edward Bean, Clare Goduti, Paul Vine and the Clerk. There were also 10 members of the public, Trevor Roff (Regeneration Positive) and Borough Cllr Martin Towler.

1. **Apologies for absence**

Cllr Foster – the apologies were accepted

2. **Declarations of Interest**

All members declared a local interest in matters relating to the NDP regarding the Old Parish Field. However, dispensations have been granted to all members 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 Cllr Vine) who therefore have the right to speak and vote on this item.

Cllrs Laws declared a local and disclosable pecuniary interest regarding item 12 – all matters relating to the NDP – community cohesion will leave the meeting for this item.

Cllr Vine declared a local interest regarding item 10

3. **Declaration of acceptance of office**

Cllr Clare Goduti signed the declaration of acceptance of office and this was witnessed by the Clerk

4. **To approve the minutes of previous meeting held on Monday 9th January**

It was resolved to approve the minutes.

5. **Matters arising from minutes**

It was reported that the Barcing group had collected rubbish from Coplowe Lane.

It was reported that a large quantity of rubbish had been left along Coplowe lane (opposite 6 Coplowe Lane) and this needs to be reported to the Borough.

Clerk

6. **Public Open Session**

It is good to see that the Bletsoe Gazette has resumed so everyone can read about what is happening in Bletsoe. The fundraising for St Mary’s Chancel project is ongoing. We are looking at alternative revenue streams and if we can demonstrate involvement in any local projects i.e. nature conservation this could strengthen our funding applications. If there are any community projects happening please let the Friends of St Mary’s know.

Is everything that is happening in the village on the parish website?

Cllr Gibbons responded that she maintains the parish website however it is up to local groups and residents to feed into the website and produce the news items. The parish council would welcome the opportunity to help promote any local events or activities on the website.

7. **RoW – Borough Consultation**

The parish council had been invited to respond to the Bedford Borough Council Rights of Way consultation.

Parish Council members had commented as individuals and considered whether the parish council could respond collectively. **It was resolved** to select the key priorities relevant to Bletsoe and these were:

- Maintain the condition of the existing network
- Maintain and improve signage and waymarking

Clerk

8. **Clerk’s report**

Sharnbrook FC had requested permission to use the playing field for weekday training Monday-Wednesday from 6pm–8pm. **It was resolved** to grant permission but to ask Sharnbrook FC to liaise with the village hall committee regarding use of toilet facilities. Members raised concerns about removing the existing steel goalposts and whether the replacement posts would be permanently installed on the field. In addition, would the new posts be the property of Sharnbrook FC or Bletsoe PC?

Clerk

Play area grass cutting – a quote had been received from DRG Arbor for £300 for 10 cuts. **It was resolved** to accept the quote.

Clerk

APM – 22nd May 7pm

Members asked if a representative from the Borough could attend specifically to talk about the Local Plan and the proposed new settlements.

Cllr
Gibbons

Members were all asked to provide their own reports for their areas of responsibility.

All

9. **To receive a report and consider any proposals from the Lady Smockers**

The Lady Smockers held a community engagement event on the 18 September and 40 people attended. The results of the event had been distributed to the parish council.

Lady
Smockers

It was resolved to upload the results onto the parish council website

Cllr
Gibbons

All the ideas put forward were scored and the criteria included how popular the activity was, the cost, whether this was a low maintenance option and was there 100% support for the idea. All options highlighted in green are ready to take forward as they fulfil all the criteria.

In terms of a 10 year plan this is work in progress and it may well be that this is not an essential element of the work planned by the Lady Smockers who ultimately wish to maintain the playing fields, incorporate a wildflower meadow, undertake hedge laying and maintain the pond.

It was noted that Shane Hughes was stepping back from the Lady Smockers due to other commitments – members of the council thanked Shane for all his work to date on behalf of the Lady Smockers.

Cllr Towler joined the meeting

A meeting has taken place between the Lady Smockers and the village hall committee. The village hall committee have no requirement for increased storage facilities. However, the Lady Smockers do require storage facilities for their equipment and their preference is for a wooden shed 10 x 15 at a cost of £2700 + VAT. The preferred location would be at the south end of the field at the far end near the pond and adjacent to the stile. The parish council had no objections to the type or location of the shed however planning permission might be required.

Lady
Smockers

The Lady Smockers would report back at the next meeting.

10. **Financial Matters**

- (i) **Grant request from St Mary’s Church – it was resolved** to approve the payment of £1169 since provision had already been included in this year’s budget.

Clerk

(ii) To approve the accounts for payment

| Ch No | Payee | £ | Description of services |
|-------|-------------------------------------|----------------|--|
| 1427 | C Carpenter | 50.00 | Spindle trees (permissive Row) |
| 1428 | E Burnett | 150.00 | Lady Smockers hedge laying training |
| 1429 | Regeneration Positive | 400.00 | Jan & Feb retainer fees plus liaison with Woods Hardwick |
| 1430 | Woods Hardwick | 4599.65 | Preparation of NDP report (1 st draft) and 3 x meetings |
| 1431 | A Southern | 20.00 | Microsoft Office 1/5 of yearly license fee (shared cost with other parishes) |
| 1432 | Beds BC | 497.46 | Grass cutting parish field |
| 1433 | BATPC | 25.00 | New Councillor training |
| 1434 | Bletsoe Village Hall Fund | 20.00 | Hall hire |
| 1435 | Friends of St Mary's Bletsoe Church | 1169.00 | Grant towards Chancel project |
| 1436 | Bletsoe Gazette | 503.90 | Refund of funds held |
| | TOTAL | 7435.01 | |

Clerk

It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment including payment to St Mary's Church and £503.90 to the Bletsoe Gazette which now has its own bank account.

It was noted that the new gate on Old Way has been installed. **It was resolved** to install some gravel under the new gate as the area gets very muddy. Cllr Caves and Vine agreed to undertake this work.

Cllr Vine and Cllr Caves

- (iii) Note spend against budget – the report was noted
- (iv) Risk assessment and asset register. **It was resolved** to accept the risk assessment. Asset Register – the revisions were approved however members asked for confirmation that the steel goalposts were being removed. It was noted that there were now only 2 salt bins and the land labelled as the allotments should be renamed as the Orchard.
- (v) **It was resolved** to re-appoint Gill Wiggs as the internal auditor
- (vi) **It was resolved** to approve the financial regulations
- (vii) Cllr Foster had visited the clerk to view the parish council accounts including the cash book, invoices received, cheque book, bank statements and bank reconciliations. She had circulated an email to confirm that the accounts were all in order and there were no discrepancies.
ok
- (viii) **It was resolved** to agree standing orders
Members asked that papers are distributed at least 5 working days prior to the meeting. Similarly, if members are producing reports these need to be submitted to the clerk in good time.
The maximum time for council meetings to remain at 2.5hrs.

12 To receive a report regarding the NDP

Cllr Laws left the room during this item

Cllr Gibbons had received correspondence from Lance Feaver regarding the Bletsoe

NDP. This was considered as part of the general discussion on the revised plan.

Members considered the following:

Page 39 - Promotion of village services

The questionnaire states that the parish council will support the village hall – what does this mean? Is the parish council taking over the village hall? *NO – although the hall is on the parish council inventory day to day management is carried out by the village hall management committee. It was resolved* to include a sentence to demonstrate that the parish council will continue to work with the village hall committee regarding upkeep and maintenance of the village hall.

Trevor Roff

The Chancel Appeal is specifically mentioned when identifying projects that could benefit from income received from the CIL levy. Why is this project being mentioned - hopefully the chancel appeal will be completed before the term of the NDP? **It was resolved** to remove reference to the chancel project and village hall from this non-policy action 6.

Trevor Roff

Should we support this plan because we do not know what local housing is going to be included in the Borough Local Plan specifically which if any of the proposed large settlements nearby will be included?

What about local policies which will be revised in the Borough’s local plan, how will this affect our plan?

Trevor Roff responded that the council are not approving the final draft – members are asked to approve this draft ready for the next stage of consultation. The plan has been written and derived from the views of the parishioners and will still go to parishioners for the final approval. The plan and its policies must be in conformity with the Borough Local Plan and our planning consultants Woods Hardwick are employed to ensure this happens.

This second draft will be put onto the parish website and there will be a drop-in evening. Perhaps there should be a covering letter that specifies that the local plan has not been drawn up and it may well change? Our local plan only covers housing – what about other considerations such as traffic which is a real concern should one of the new settlements at Twinwoods or Thurleigh go ahead?

Trevor Roff responded that the issue of development around Bletsoe PC is something that the PC will need to respond to and the Borough will shortly be consulting on the Local Plan. The results of the recent questionnaire have suggested there is support for a small number of houses (14). At the referendum, at least 50% of the vote must be in support of the plan for it to go to the Borough for approval.

Should we not include traffic issues within the Bletsoe Local Plan? Perhaps we should include a general transport policy – highlighting where we want traffic directed away from Bletsoe, we know what we want and what we want to protect. *Trevor Roff agreed to speak with Woods Hardwick regarding this.*

Trevor Roff

Parish Council need to respond to the Local Plan and the impact of new settlements.

Cllr Bean noted that of all the sites proposed for development in his opinion Captains Close is the only site where development should take place. The other developments in the village are outside of the SPA.

Please can the NDP plan be proof-read again prior to distribution.

Trevor

It was resolved to pass this second draft through to the next stage of consultation.

Roff

It was noted that there are several more processes to complete as part of the NDP and that the plan should be ready for public consultation with parishioners sometime in May or June. A referendum will then need to take place.

Only if the plan is approved by the parishioners will it be taken forward.

Hopefully by September the plan will be submitted to the Borough Council and then finally it is sent to the planning inspector – this process could take between 3-6 months.

13 **Parish Concerns**

Paul Vine agreed to attend the police meeting in Kempston on the 21st March and the key priorities identified were speeding and fly tipping.

P Vine

Now that the area near the pond has been cleared and the pond is more noticeable we might have a problem with safety and liability. The problem is that one side of the pond is quite steep and it might be difficult to get out.

Clerk

It was resolved to include the playing field pond when the next play inspection is undertaken since Rospa are approved to include this in their inspections. It might be that the parish council may need to install a warning sign and perhaps a floatation device near to the pond.

There appears to be a lot of rubbish alongside the A6 again. Cllr Towler agreed to speak with Paul Pace at Bedford Borough Council regarding this.

Cllr
Towler

Ditch on Coplowe Lane – it is thought that the pipe is blocked, possibly by parts of the missing manhole cover perhaps this explains why the lane has started to flood. Can we request a visual inspection of the ditch by Bedford Borough Council?

Clerk

One of the apple trees in the orchard is in a poor condition and will probably need to be removed. Can we ask Adrian to obtain some replacement trees?

Clerk/
Adrian
Fett

It was noted that the clearance of the path from Bletsoe to Sharnbrook roundabout has now been completed.

It was reported that the annual bonfire will continue to be held on the parish playing field to co-incide with Halloween. However, the fireworks display will this year be moving to the Falcon Pub.

It was reported that a final injunction has been served on Mr Allen regarding his illegal occupation of the Waiting for the Sun site. Mr Allen must comply with the terms of the injunction and clear the site within 9 months or he could face a jail term. Mr Allen’s application for Legal Aid was refused.

14. **Date of next meeting – Monday 22nd May 2017**

Annual Parish Meeting 7pm followed immediately afterwards by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

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Approved by Chairman 22 May 2017