

**Minutes of meeting of Bletsoe Parish Council held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at the Village Hall, Memorial Lane, Bletsoe**

**Present:**

Present: Ann Gibbons (Chairman), Mary Laws, Alison Foster, Clare Goduti, Paul Vine, Borough Cllr Martin Towler and the Clerk. There were also 6 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence**

None – Paul Caves would be joining the meeting later.

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 10 – all matters relating to the NDP

Cllr Vine declared a local interest regarding items 6 – matters relating to the Lady Smockers and grass cutting of the Orchard.

3. **To approve the minutes of previous meeting held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June**

One minor amendment to the wording of section 7 which now stated:

At the last meeting it was noted that the parish needs to find a long-term solution for cutting the Orchard. The Lady Smockers have kindly taken over this role temporarily and have undertaken 4 cuts so far. **It was resolved** to obtain a costing from Bedford Borough Council – no of cuts to be advised by the Lady Smockers. Cllr Vine is looking into options for purchasing a mower to cut the playing field grass and will liaise with the Clerk to put a proposal together for the September meeting. The amendment was accepted and **it was resolved** to approve the minutes

Confidential minutes regarding item 14 were circulated and **it was resolved** to approve the minutes.

4. **Matters arising from minutes**

Item 13 – BPHA re parking area adjacent to property on corner of Memorial Lane and The Avenue. Cllr Laws confirmed that she has contacted BPHA and will update the council once she receives a response at the November meeting.

5. **Public Open Session**

Village hall and playing field – currently hall hire does not include use of playing field although on many occasions i.e. the WI BBQ hirers do use the field. The village fete and anyone hiring the hall for weddings must take out their own PL insurance for use of the field. Could the council explore the possibility of PL insurance cover for use of the field by hirers of the hall? It was suggested that automatically the landowner (i.e. the parish council) has liability for use of the field. However, **it was resolved** that the Clerk and Mike Gibbons would discuss further with their insurance companies to see if a solution could be found.

Recently there had been a village hall function which clashed with football training causing parking problems as the hall car park was full. Could the village hall management committee be given a key for the playing field gate? **It was resolved** that a key would be supplied for the village hall. The football club had been asked to supply a list of dates to ensure the village hall can manage any future parking clashes.

Clerk

M Laws

Clerk  
Mike Gibbons

Paul Vine  
Mike Gibbons

6. **To receive a report from The Lady Smockers**

A proposal had been circulated from Cllr Vine outlining costs of purchasing a mower for cutting the playing field, purchase of a shed for storage and future savings and maintenance costs. This purchase if approved could be funded either from Undesignated reserves, the CiL Levy (from development of Rhonda, Rushden Road, Bletsoe) or a combination of reserves and CiL Levy.

Members considered the proposal and there was concern regarding the initial cost (£9K of reserves) plus ongoing maintenance costs. It was suggested that perhaps a better solution would be to build up reserves for the next few years to pay for this item.

*Cllr Vine responded that the council would have made its money back in 4 years through savings on grass cutting costs contracted out elsewhere and that there were several options to raise the money not just through reserves. Members were also concerned regarding the sustainability of the scheme which would rely on volunteers to undertake this work. Members felt that although Bletsoe is fortunate to have lots of volunteers this is quite an undertaking and does require large amount of public money.*

*Cllr Vine responded that so far there are 7 volunteers who have agreed to assist with the grass cutting across a range of ages so there is capacity to share the work. With so many volunteers the scheme should be sustainable in the long term and the equipment should retain its value.*

**It was resolved** to defer this item until the parish council know exactly how much the CiL levy will be and when would it be paid to the council.

Clerk

Cllr Vine then gave a brief report on the activities of the Lady Smockers since the last meeting. This financial year we have spent £200 out of the £500 budget to buy a trailer – this has been a brilliant addition to the Smockers equipment and made life much easier for everyone. Improvement works continue around the pond and the group have obtained a large quantity of logs and will be installing steps around 2/3 of the pond and then bank up the sides. A warning sign has been purchased and will be installed shortly. We intend to purchase more seeds for the wildflower area and meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> September to plan work for the Autumn.

Cllr Gibbons thanked all the volunteers on behalf of the parish council for their continued hard work maintaining the playing field and for cutting the Orchard.

7. **To consider continuation of permissive rights scheme for land owned by Mrs Knights**

A copy of the agreement had been circulated to all members. **It was resolved** to continue with the agreement and the parish council would pay for additional spindle trees and any additional signage required.

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

(i) There were no new planning applications to consider and the report was noted. The application for Black Barn, Thurleigh Road has been withdrawn. This is due to the potential flooding risk which is higher than the applicant has registered. The Environment Agency has graded the area as a level 3 not level 1. The owners will most likely re-submit once the flooding considerations have been dealt with.

*Cllr Towler joined the meeting.*

(ii) **New developments at Twinwoods and Thurleigh Airfield**

A local meeting took place in August at Bletsoe Village Hall and in total we had 23 parish councils represented and 65 attendees. Three of the garden villages proposed are in the surrounding area and will affect the A6 ultimately causing severe congestion

at the Sainsbury's roundabout. The CPRE feel that the Borough's housing quote is over assessed and does not take into consideration the 2011 consensus. A representative from CPRE provided a presentation and a highways engineer gave a report based on his analysis of the reports submitted by the housing developers. Even one of the new large developments would generate an additional 20,000 vehicle movements every day. There is no provision for a bypass to join up to the A421 and the Black Cat roundabout. In addition at the A6 roundabout a new supermarket is being built which will result in a 5<sup>th</sup> spur off the roundabout and even more traffic. As a result of the meeting it was agreed to produce a draft letter produced for all the parish councillors and it is hoped that all parishes agree to submit the letter to the Mayor or sign as joint signatories. It was also agreed that a flyer would be produced and each parish council will pay for their own print costs. A further public meeting will take place in Oakley (Lincroft School) and the date will be included on the flyer.

10 **To receive an update regarding the NDP and to approve funding for completion of the plan**

Cllr Gibbons reported that we have not received any costings from Woods Hardwick. There is the possibility of a further grant for technical issues – we will report back at the November meeting,

9. **Financial Matters**

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

Ch No	Payee	£	Description of services
1459	A Southern	37.00	Working from home allowance
1460	Bletsoe Village Hall Fund	10.00	Hall Hire September meeting
1461	Regeneration Positive	25.00	NDP consultancy fees
1462	Mark Harrod Ltd	684.00	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>756.00</b>	

Clerk

**It was resolved** to approve the accounts for payment. It was noted that the FA would reimburse 50% of the cost of the new goalposts and that Sharnbrook FC would arrange for the removal of the old posts and installation of the new ones.

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

The report was noted. Members were reminded about the amount of earmarked reserves and undesignated reserves as at the end of August.

12 **To note the Clerk's report**

All items for information only and there were no matters for consideration.

13 **Parish Concerns**

Policing meeting – Cllr Vine circulated a brief report following the last meeting. The meeting was well attended and Cllr Vine agreed to attend the next meeting and report back. The meetings take place on a quarterly basis.

P Vine  
P Vine  
P Caves

Main gate to the field – the post needs re-setting – it was resolved to ask Paul Caves if he knows anyone who could do this.

Two members of the PCC had asked what is the parish council's views on storage of parish council records in the vestry. The Church warden was present and confirmed this was not an immediate issue but that it would be good to get the paperwork sorted and tidied up. Cllrs Gibbons and Foster volunteered to look through the papers, some

of which could be destroyed but anything of historical importance could go to the county archive department.

A Gibbons  
A Foster

A resident had enquired if the parish council would consider providing allotments. The clerk advised that a minimum of 6 members of the parish who are on the electoral roll or liable to pay council tax would need to make written representations to the council before the council must assess whether there is a demand for allotments in the area. **It was resolved** to refer this matter to the November meeting providing sufficient interest had been expressed in writing by members of the parish (minimum 6 residents).

Clerk

15 **Date of next meeting – Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

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Approved by Chairman 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017