



Minutes of the meeting of BLETSOE PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 28th November 2023 at 7.30pm in Bletsoe Village Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Clare Goduti (Chair), Donna Glanvill, Mark Abraham, Alison Field-Foster, Peter Margrave, Sue Binks, Claire Woodward.

In attendance: David Brough (Clerk), Martin Towler (Borough Councillor), Richard Fuller (MP), two police officers, and 13 members of the public.

1 **Public Open Session:**

- Borough Councillor Martin Towler's report was circulated to councillors and is available upon request. Martin kindly agreed to put £1100 of his ward fund towards playground resurfacing at the village hall.
- No members of the public addressed the council.

2 **Apologies for Absence:** None.

3 **Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:** Cllr Margrave declared a personal interest in item 9 (Parking on Memorial Lane) as someone who uses the street for parking. Cllr Margrave would not have taken part in any vote on this item, had there been one.

4 **To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting** held on 26th September 2023.
Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

5 **Clerk's report on actions**

- Discussions with local groups about funding churchyard maintenance. Cllrs Glanvill and Goduti had met with local groups to discuss the issue of fundraising. Of note was the idea for a pop-up pub fundraising evening.
- Purchase of a tree for planting at the Memorial Garden. Cllr Glanvill provided an update: planting is expected in the Spring, funded by a local resident – tree is being provided by the parish council.
- Play area surfacing – third quote received, which was required for submission of a grant application to the borough council. The borough council's new Rural England Prosperity fund could not provide grant funding but an application to the Rural Grant scheme is suitable.

6 **Financial Matters**

- The payments listed in the appendix were approved.
- The Clerk talked through the Budget Variance report and the council balances (available in the appendix). At this point in the year the spending is under budget.
- To discuss the budget and precept setting for 2024/25: the Clerk presented an example budget with updated costs and explained that the precept/budget would need to be set in the January council meeting.

7 **Grass cutting**

To appoint a contractor for the maintenance of the orchard, Memorial Garden, play area and the surround of the village hall.

The council reviewed two quotes for the work and **resolved** to accept the better-value quote from H&G Landscapes.

8 **Land behind Captain's Close (aka Old Parish Field)**

To consider moving forward with obtaining quotes from professional services firms for the sale of the above land, in line with the Bletsoe Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNP Policy 2 – residential development of up to 8 dwellings).

Following an in-depth discussion about the uses of the funding arising from the sale of land versus considerations of the requirement for new housing in the village, it was **resolved** to move forward with obtaining quotes, and a high-level plan, from planning agents in relation to the sale of this land. The quotes will be brought to a future meeting for consideration and no final decision has yet been made as to whether to proceed with the sale at this point.

9 **Parking on Memorial Lane**

Proposal from Cllr Foster: To consider what can be done to resolve parking issues on Memorial Lane.

Cllr Field-Foster explained the issue of village hall event traffic causing issues for residents of Memorial Lane, such as driveways being blocked, and asked for any ideas to resolve it. Many options were considered during a lengthy discussion, but none were considered viable for a proposal. Therefore, it was agreed to monitor the issue.

10 **New dog signs**

Proposal from Cllr Margrave: To consider the purchase of additional/replacement signs at the entrances to the New Parish Field behind the village hall following reported dog fouling incidents.

Resolved to spend up to £50 for the purchase of dog fouling signs for the entrances to the New Parish Field. **Action:** Cllr Margrave kindly volunteered to purchase the signs and install them.

11 **Defibrillator training**

Proposal from Cllr Glanvill: To consider providing public defibrillator training.

Resolved to organise defibrillator training from East Anglian Air Ambulance up to a cost of £150.

Action: Clerk and Cllr Glanvill to organise and publicise the event.

12 **Planning applications**

To consider any applications received since the last meeting, including any received after the agenda has been published: No planning applications were received.

13 **Annual NJC pay scale adjustment**

- It was **resolved** that, under Section 1 Paragraph 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the next item of business due to the confidential nature of staff matters. The public left the room at this point.
- *In line with contractual obligations, to agree to implement the new pay scales as agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) for 2023-24; to be implemented (backdated) from 1st April 2023. Clerk contract is tied to this salary scale.*
It was **resolved** to implement the new payscales and backdate it to 1st April 2023.

14 **Business for future agendas (No actions can be taken on items not on the agenda)**

No further items raised.

Date of next meeting: 23rd January 2023 – Bletsoe Village Hall

Payments and receipts - November 2023

				Receipts	Payments Gross	Payments VAT
28 September 2023	Precept Income	BBC		6,167.50		
10 October 2023	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH	September		12.00	
16 October 2023	Streetlights: Elect	NPower			189.66	
23 October 2023	Grounds Maintenance	H and G	Oct: Orchard, Mem gardens, Play area		240.00	
Not yet paid	Admin	BATPC	Chairman training x2		90.00	
Not yet paid	Grounds Maintenance	H and G	Nov: Orchard, Mem gardens, Play area, hedge		365.00	
Not yet paid	Admin	RBL	Remembrance wreath		19.99	
Not yet paid	Smockers	P A Vine	Smockers expenses Oct/Nov		62.18	
Not yet paid	Staff costs	Multiple	Staff Costs: Oct/Nov Salary & Oct-Dec PAYE		777.40	
Not yet paid	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH	October		12.00	

2023/24 P&L (Adjusted for VAT) - As at Nov 2023

<u>Income</u>		YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget	Full year forecast	Variance
Precept Income		12,335	12,335		
	Parish Field Rent	700	500		
	Wayleave Income	16	17		
	Resident donation	150	0		
Other Income		866	517		
VAT Refund			0		
CIL Receipts		0	0		
Bank Interest		0	0		
Total Income		13,201	12,852		
<u>Outgoings</u>					
Employment Costs	Staff Costs	3,110	4,800		
		3,110	4,800	4,665	135
	Village Hall Hire	56	0		
	Payroll fees	95	0		
	ICO - Annual Data Protection	0	0		
	Memberships	97	0		
	Admin	145	700		
	Clerk Expenses	51	400		
	Internal Audit	150	0		
	Website running cost	110	200		
Admin		704	1,300	854	446
Insurance	Insurance	1,328	1,200	1,328	-128
	Smockers	482	800		
	Grounds maintenance	2,045	2,000		
	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	0	200		
	Play Area Inspection	150	200		
	Streetlights: Maint	111	0		
	Streetlights: Elect	626	1,300		
Highways and open spaces		3,413	4,500	4,051	449
Grants out	Fete Insurance	284			
		284	550	284	266
	Contingency	0			
	Streetlight LED upgrade	5,438			
Miscellaneous		5,438	500	5,438	-4,938
Total Outgoings		14,278	12,850	16,621	-3,771
Year To Date Net P&L		-1,077	2		-3,771

Saving of £1.6k with streetlight upgrade removed

2023/24 - Balance - Nov 2023

	£	
Natwest Current Account Current Balance (Forecast)	26,715	
<u>Allocation of Balance Sheet</u>		
Budget remaining to spend	2,343	Set aside
BRA Reserve	4,217	Set aside
BBC Highways Speed Survey	2,000	Set aside
Election costs (Estimate)	3,000	Set aside
General reserve (Balancing figure)	15,154	Unallocated
VAT refund due in (Approximation)	1,159	Unallocated - not yet received