



Minutes of the meeting of BLETSOE PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 23rd January 2024 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), and 13 members of the public.

1 Public Open Session:

- Members of the public: Two residents spoke in relation to the planning application at Agenda Item 10. One resident spoke to confirm the amount of money held in the bus shelter donation pot (Agenda Item 8).
- Borough Councillor Martin Towler report: Verbal report provided – the key topics included: a) the imminent commencement of Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) operating leisure facilities (2-year contract) across the borough, ending the 10-year Fusion contract. b) The borough council is the highest bidder for the Debenhams building on Bedford High Street, with the expectation that it would be used for a collection of smaller retail stalls.

2 Apologies for Absence: None.

3 Declarations of interest in items on the agenda: Cllr Field-Foster declared an interest in the planning application at item 10 and left the room for the duration of this item.

4 To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 28th November 2023.
Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

5 Clerk's report on actions

- Defibrillator training booked for Saturday 27th January 2024. Cllr Glanvill has arranged the training and wished to thank the Town Close charity for covering the cost of the replacement defibrillator.
- New dog fouling signs for New Parish Field – signs purchased and will be installed imminently.

6 Financial Matters

- *To approve payments and note receipts, balances, and the budget variance report.*
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 set the budget and precept for 2024/25.*
The budget was approved with a precept figure of £12,978. This is an increase from the prior year of £643. The largest driver is the increase in grounds maintenance costs, which has moved closer to a commercial level. Individual households will see an increase in the parish-council portion of council tax of 3.6%, which equates to an extra £3.62 for the year for a Band D property.

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

Update: Quotes obtained from planning agents, as agreed at the November 2023 council meeting, for the potential sale of the above land in line with the Bletsoe Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNP Policy 2 – residential development of up to 8 dwellings). No final decision has yet been made as to whether to proceed with the sale at this point.

- *Proposal from Cllr Field-Foster: To create a working group of councillors for the purposes of: Reviewing the planning agent quotes and understanding the options available for the sale of the land, to allow an informed discussion and decision at a future council meeting*

Councillors discussed the purpose of the working group: for a clearer understanding of the planning agent quotes and advice, and to bring back any decision to a future full council meeting. It was **resolved** to form a working group for this purpose.

8 **Bus shelter monies**

Proposal from Cllr Goduti: To consider a beneficiary for the small amount of money in the donation pot in the bus shelter.

Resolved to support that the money (£30) should be put towards the maintenance of the churchyard. It was agreed that the perished books should be removed.

9 **Play area surfacing**

To consider the installation of safety surfacing under the two swingsets at the play area – issue mentioned in the inspection report.

Update: Martin Towler's Ward Fund has committed £1100. Awaiting the outcome of the application to BBC Rural Grant Fund for £2145. Remaining payment of £1045 would then be required by the parish council.

Resolved to put forward the remaining £1045 towards the project – should the £2145 not be provided by the Rural Grant Fund then the Clerk should return the item to the next agenda for discussion.

10 **Planning applications**

To consider any applications received since the last meeting, including any received after the agenda has been published:

APPLICATION NO: 24/00010/FUL Full Planning Application

PROPOSAL: Erection of 3 dwellings with vehicular access

LOCATION : Land Adjacent To Rectory Cottage 72 The Avenue Bletsoe Bedfordshire

Resolved to object to this planning application for the following reason:

- The size of the dwellings in the planning application is misaligned with the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The NDP's Housing Needs Survey from Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) evidenced a need for smaller market housing of 2-3 bedrooms, including from older residents looking to downsize and younger adults looking to move out of the family home and/or get on the housing ladder.

The parish council also **resolved** to put forward the following comments:

- **Highways:** The council notes that the traffic speed survey was carried out over a limited period of just one week – this is not deemed to be a sufficient time period. Further, there are concerns that oncoming vehicles will have their vision restricted by the corner and may be contending with new cars parked at the front of the development causing an obstruction.
- **Drainage:** The council is concerned that: a) building work may disrupt drainage, and b) the runoff from the new development will add to the water that flows down The Avenue into the village during periods of heavy rain.
- **Site layout:** It was noted that the house nearest the road appears to be overwhelming/ compressing the space afforded to the other two. It was noted that the third house from the road could suit a smaller dwelling size and be suitable as a home for smaller families.
- **Dwelling Design/Style:** The council is pleased with the overall design/aesthetics of the dwellings.
- **EV charging:** The council requests the provision of EV charging for each household.

11 **Request for support**

- 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 personal and familial details involved in discussing the below request from a resident. The public then left the meeting.
- *To consider a request from a resident to support an exchange of housing with BPHA.*
Resolved to support a Bletsoe resident in exchanging their BPHA housing.

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

No items raised for future agendas.

Date of next meeting: 26th March 2024 – Bletsoe Village Hall

Payments and receipts - January 2024

	Date	Category	Payee	Description	Receipts	Payments	Payments
						Gross	VAT
	11 December 2023	Website running cost	Cloudnext	Annual Hosting Fee (Expenses)		119.98	19.99
	11 December 2023	Payroll fees	Red Shoes	Qtrly payroll fees		15.60	2.60
	11 December 2023	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	P Margrave	Dog signs reimbursement		45.35	
	02 January 2024	Website running cost	Eyelid Productions	Annual support		100.00	
	15 January 2024	Streetlights: Elect	NPower			212.69	
	Not yet paid	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH	November		12.00	
	Not yet paid	ICO - Annual Data Protection	ICO			40.00	
	Not yet paid	Staff costs	N/A	Staff Costs - Dec/Jan		544.84	
	Not yet paid	Smockers	D Dyer	Parts for servicing of machinery		170.77	

2023/24 P&L (Adjusted for VAT) - As at Jan 2024

<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	3,654	4,800		
		3,654	4,800	4,665	135
	Village Hall Hire	68	0		
	Payroll fees	108	0		
	ICO - Annual Data Protection	40	0		
	Memberships	97	0		
	Admin	145	700		
	Clerk Expenses	51	400		
	Internal Audit	150	0		
	Website running cost	310	200		
Admin		969	1,300	1,119	181
Insurance	Insurance	1,328	1,200	1,328	-128
	Smockers	653	800		
	Grounds maintenance	2,045	2,000		
	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	45	200		
	Play Area Inspection	150	200		
	Streetlights: Maint	111	0		
	Streetlights: Elect	839	1,300		
Highways and open spaces		3,842	4,500	4,480	20
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		15,517	12,850	17,315	-4,465
Year To Date Net P&L		-2,315	2		-4,465

Saving of £1k with streetlight
upgrade removed

2023/24 - Balance - Jan 2024

	£	
Natwest Current Account Current Balance (Forecast)	25,453	
<u>Allocation of Balance Sheet</u>		
Budget remaining to spend	1,400	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)	14,836	Unallocated
VAT refund due in (Approximation)	1,182	Unallocated - not yet received