



Minutes of the ANNUAL meeting of BLETSOE PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 28th May 2024 at 7.30pm in Bletsoe Village Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Clare Goduti (Chair), Mark Abraham, Alison Field-Foster, Peter Margrave, Sue Binks. David Brough (Clerk), Martin Towler (Borough Councillor), and 21 members of the public.

1 **Election of Chairman**

Resolved to elect Cllr Clare Goduti as the Chair for the coming year. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was signed.

2 **Election of Vice Chairman**

Resolved to elect Cllr Claire Woodward as the Vice Chair for the coming year.

3 **Public Open Session:**

- Member of the public recommended a developer for the Land Behind Captain's Close. Clerk recorded the details.
- Members of the public spoke in relation to: the positioning of the public open forum in the meeting, concerns over hearing what was being said at the meeting, planning matters, and poor fibre broadband connectivity at Bourne End Lane.
- Borough Councillor Martin Towler had provided a written report in advance and highlighted: a pilot of "Orange bin" glass collections, the new Bedford Borough Customer Hub a new initiative aimed at providing comprehensive support and services to residents situated at 2 Horne Lane, Bedford, and the imminent reopening of the Oasis swimming pool.

4 **Apologies for Absence: Resolved** to accept apologies from Cllrs Donna Glanvill (Work commitment) and Claire Woodward (Unwell).

5 **Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:** Cllr Field-Foster declared an interest in item 13 (Planning Application 24/00010/FUL) and left the room for the duration of this item.

6 **To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting** held on 26th March 2024.
Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

7 **Clerk's report on actions**

- Play area surfacing: BBC Rural Grant application confirmed. Playground contractor has been instructed.
- Land behind Captain's Close (BNP Policy 2 – residential development of up to 8 dwellings): Working Group of councillors met in May 2024 to review the quotes and advice from planning agents. A further on-site meeting with an agent is planned; to aid understanding of the process and to ensure there are no obvious blockers if the council decided to proceed with a sale.

8 **Financial Matters**

- *To approve payments and note receipts, balances, and the budget variance report.*
The payments listed in the appendix were approved. The council reviewed the balances and it was **resolved** to move £18k into an earmarked reserve for Asset Maintenance; currently the amount is sitting in General Reserves, which wrongly suggests it is available to spend.
- *Annual accounts (2023/24): To receive the internal audit report and approve sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) form.*
Councillors had reviewed the internal audit report, the AGAR, and supporting documentation in advance and **resolved** to approve sections 1 and 2.

- *To approve the use of the existing internal auditor, Julie Betts, for another year.* The council considered that the internal auditor was both independent and competent and **resolved** to approve the use of Julie Betts for the coming year.

9 **Meeting dates**

To consider if any changes are required to the dates of council meetings and the Annual Parish meeting for the coming year.

It was agreed by councillors that the current dates were still suitable: The fourth Tuesday of every second month – July, September, November, January, March, May (Annual meetings).

10 **Full Fibre Broadband**

Proposal from Cllr Binks: To share information and consider any actions related to obtaining improved broadband in Bletsoe.

Cllr Binks confirmed she'd had preliminary conversations with Gigaclear about improving Bletsoe's Broadband connectivity; she would keep pursuing it with Gigaclear and another rural provider. Cllr Binks will provide another update at a future meeting.

11 **Grass cutting**

To consider if the New Parish Field (behind the village hall) will be cut by volunteers or whether a paid contractor is required.

Cllr Goduti confirmed that the council's mower had a faulty control panel (expected cost £160) and was booked in for repair.

For the current field grass cutting, it was **resolved** to continue with cuts carried out by volunteers, but to also delegate spending powers to the Clerk should a contractor need to be engaged at any point (spending powers of up to £350 per cut). It was also raised that should a village hall hirer want use of the field as part of their event then a contribution to grass cutting should be requested; this would need agreement and coordination with the Village Hall Committee.

12 **Speed sign data**

Proposal from Cllr Goduti: To receive data from the speed indication device (SID).

The councillors reviewed data from the speed sign on The Avenue (near Coplowe Lane) from 1st March to 24th May 2024. The data showed a 16% level of speed violations (above 30mph) from 9059 vehicles approaching the sign during that period. The average speed was 25mph and highest speed of 55mph (cannot rule out blue-light vehicles). No actions were requested from the councillors.

13 **Planning applications**

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

None at time of agenda issue.

- *For noting only: To receive any updates from the borough council on the below application, to which the parish council previously objected.*

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

It was noted that this application had not yet been decided by the borough council and was likely, but not officially confirmed, to be taken to the borough's planning committee for a decision.

14 **Pre-emption right on a property sale**

- 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 data involved in the below item. <All members of the public left the meeting>.
- *To consider whether to take up the pre-emption rights from 1985 on the sale of a garage in St Mary's Close. The rights allow the parish council first refusal to purchase the garage. Also to consider whether to agree to the removal of the rights for the future in a Deed Of Variation.*

It was **resolved**:

- That the parish council would not take up the pre-emption right to purchase the garage
- To retain the pre-emption right and not to proceed with a Deed of Variation to remove it

- 15 **Business for future agendas – for noting only** (no actions can be taken on items not on the agenda)
No items for future agendas.

Date of next meeting: 23rd July 2024 – Bletsoe Village Hall



Payments and receipts - May 2024

Date Paid	Category	Payee/Payer	Desc	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	Cashbook Balance	Bank balance		
Natwest										
Opening balance							£	23,166.75	£	23,166.75
08/04/2024	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH	March			£	12.00			
15/04/2024	Streetlights: Elect	NPower				£	222.06			
15/04/2024	Precept Income	BBC	1st half		£	6,489.00				
18/04/2024	VAT Reclaim	HMRC			£	1,655.05				
22/04/2024	Grounds Maintenance	H and G	April: Orchard, Mem gardens, Play area - Inv27			£	375.00		£	30,701.74
Not yet paid	Grounds Maintenance	H and G	May: Orchard, Mem gardens, Play area - Inv28			£	375.00			
Not yet paid	Insurance	Gallagher	Annual insurance			£	1,280.85			
Not yet paid	Internal Audit	Julie Betts				£	155.00			
Not yet paid	Smockers	N/A	Smockers expenses April			£	15.12			
Not yet paid	Staff costs	Multiple	Staff Costs: Salary + PAYE			£	832.26			
Not yet paid	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH	May			£	12.00			
Closing balance							£	28,031.51		

2023/24 - Balance - May 2024

Natwest Current Account Current Balance (Forecast)

£
28,032

Allocation of Balance Sheet

BRA Reserve

4,217

Set aside

General reserve (Balancing figure)

23,814

Unallocated

VAT refund due in (Approximation)

0

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

<u>Income</u>		YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget	Full year forecast	Variance
Precept Income		6,489	12,978		
	Parish Field Rent	0	500		
	Wayleave Income	0	17		
	VAT Reclaim	1,655	0		
	Resident donation	0	0		
Other Income		1,655	517		
Total Income		8,144	13,495		
<u>Outgoings</u>					
Employment Costs		832	4,805		
	Staff Costs	832	4,805	4,805	0
	Village Hall Hire	24	90		
	Payroll fees	0	110		
	ICO - Annual Data Protection	0	35		
	Memberships	0	105		
	Admin	0	50		
	Clerk Expenses	0	50		
	Internal Audit	155	150		
	Website running cost	0	200		
Admin		179	790	790	0
Insurance		1,281	1,500	1,281	219
	Smockers	15	800		
	Grounds maintenance	750	3,390		
	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	0	200		
	Play Area Inspection	0	160		
	Streetlights: Maint	0	0		
	Streetlights: Elect	211	800		
Highways and open spaces		977	5,350	5,350	0
Grants out		0	550	550	0
Miscellaneous		0	500	500	0
	Contingency	0			
Total Outgoings		3,269	13,495	13,276	219
Year To Date Net P&L		4,875	0		219