



Minutes of the meeting of BLETSOE PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 23rd July 2024 at 7.30pm in Bletsoe Village Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Clare Goduti (Chair), Mark Abraham, Alison Field-Foster, Peter Margrave, Claire Woodward, Sue Binks, Philip Greetham, David Brough (Clerk), and 13 members of the public.

1 **Public Open Session:**

- Member of the public spoke to request assistance in getting the Stagecoach No.28 bus to route through the village rather than just down Coplowe Lane. Clerk to help direct this request to the right contacts at the borough council.

2 **Apologies for Absence:** All parish councillors present.
Borough Cllr Martin Towler had a conflicting borough council meeting.

3 **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.

4 **To approve the minutes of the “extra” ordinary parish council meeting** held on 20th June 2024.
Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

5 **Clerk’s report on actions**

- Play area surfacing: Resurfacing work completed.
- 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 took place to aid understanding of the process and to ensure there are no obvious blockers if the council decided to proceed with a sale. Advice is currently being reviewed with no final decision currently made as to whether to proceed.
- Annual accounts have been submitted to the external auditor, Mazars.

6 **Financial Matters**

To approve payments and note receipts, balances, and the budget variance report.

The payments listed in the appendix were approved and financial reports were noted with no concerns raised.

7 **Standing Orders**

To review and adopt the most-current set of Standing Orders.

Resolved to adopt the Standing Orders, which now refers to the Cooption Policy.

8 **Cooption Policy**

To review and adopt a Cooption Policy.

Resolved to adopt the Cooption Policy. This sets out the process to be followed when a Casual Vacancy occurs within the parish council.

9 **Cooption**

To consider coopting to fill the one vacancy for parish councillor.

The Council followed the procedure as outlined in the Cooption Policy and **resolved** to coopt Philip Greetham to the council. Cllr Greetham signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the councillors for the remainder of the meeting.

10 **Full Fibre Broadband**

Proposal from Cllr Binks: To share an update related to obtaining improved broadband in Bletsoe.

Cllr Binks stated that Openreach won't engage in relation to improved broadband until there is enough public interest; they did not share how much interest would be required. Gigaclear also would not engage in discussion, despite apparently doing so in Sharnbrook. Otherwise, the current plan is for ultrafast broadband by 2030. Residents can show their interest via a QR code website link that the council will look to publicise.

11 **New Parish Field – grounds maintenance**

Ongoing review of the approach for cutting the New Parish Field (behind the village hall) and the use of volunteers and paid contractors.

Following a thorough consideration of options available for cutting the field, the following approach was agreed:

For the next cut:

Outer perimeter of field: A resident (PV) has kindly offered to complete this

Inner field: Contractor K Pickering (£200 a cut)

Ongoing:

Plan A (Preferred)

Outer perimeter of field: Volunteer group under the direction of Cllr Binks (basic training provided as required)

Inner field: Contractor K Pickering (£200 a cut)

Plan B (In the event that volunteers were no longer available)

Outer perimeter of field: Resident (PV) or alternative at a cost to be agreed

Inner field: Contractor K Pickering (£200 a cut)

Other points to note:

- Delegation for spending on contractors between meetings remains with the Clerk
- Volunteers are to use the parish council's equipment so that they are covered by the insurance
- Clerk will analyse the ongoing spend to give an indication of the future costs for the field

12 **Old Parish Field**

- *To consider any actions related to maintenance following the anticipated decision of the tenant not to renew the agreement for grazing on the Old Parish Field.*

Resolved to return the tenant's deposit in full as a gesture of goodwill without having to reinstate the land to a grazeable state; the tenant had issues with her horse escaping due to the fencing being tampered with. Cllr Abraham has kindly agreed to cut the field once the tenant has removed their fencing – expected to be towards the end of August. Cllr Greetham kindly agreed to cut the footpath that runs through the field, assuming his mower can fit down it.

- *To consider whether to advertise for a new tenant for grazing on the Old Parish Field, in anticipation of the current tenant not renewing.*

Resolved to wait until the next council meeting in September before deciding to advertise for a new tenant; this would give time for the field to be cut.

13 **Planning applications**

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

APPLICATION NO: 24/01239/COU Change of Use Application

PROPOSAL: Change of use to allow car auctions (sui generis use).

LOCATION : Coombelands Park Thurleigh Road Milton Ernest Bedfordshire MK44 1ZY

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

Traffic generation

- The council disagrees that the proposed use of this site is the same as the previous owner's (Cazoo). The previous use was online auctions and car storage, but the proposed operation will be for physically-attended auctions and car storage. This will therefore cause a sharp uplift in the number of vehicle movements: 70 attendees plus the movements of vehicles after being purchased. Some of

these vehicles will undoubtedly come through Bletsoe; the tight roads are not suitable for high-level use of this kind.

- The council requests a condition be added, should the application be approved, that Coplowe Lane is not to be used for operations due to its unsuitable width and blind spots.

Highways safety

The council notes issues with the previous owner's activities that it expects to reoccur:

- Cars "abandoned" carelessly on verges for collection by customers. In particular, this blocks visibility splays leaving Coplowe Lane.
- Cars being loaded onto trailers on National Speed Limit roads causing a safety issue.

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

Cllr Field-Foster left the room for this item due to a declared interest.

The following application outcome was noted:

BBC Response: Application Refused. Officer's report available on the BBC planning website.

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

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

Date of next meeting: 24th September 2024 – Bletsoe Village Hall

Date Paid	Category	Payee/Payer	Desc	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	VAT	Cashbook Balance	Bank balance			
Natwest												
Opening balance								£	28,031.51	£	28,031.51	
10/06/2024	Payroll fees	Red Shoes	Qtrly payroll fees			£	15.60	£	2.60			
10/06/2024	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	K C PICKERING				£	200.00					
11/06/2024	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	K C PICKERING				£	200.00					
24/06/2024	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	K C PICKERING				£	200.00					
24/06/2024	Play Area Inspection	Playsafety	Annual inspection			£	187.20	£	31.20			
26/06/2024	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH	June			£	12.00					
26/06/2024	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	Reids				£	5,148.00	£	858.00			
26/06/2024	Grounds maintenance - Central	H and G	June			£	375.00					
01/07/2024	Grant income	BBC	Playground surfacing		£	2,145.00						
15/07/2024	Streetlights: Elect	NPower				£	177.43	£	8.45	£	23,661.28	
Not yet paid	Smockers	P A Vine	Smockers expenses July			£	57.33					
Not yet paid	Grounds maintenance - Central	H and G	July			£	375.00					
Not yet paid	Smockers	Whites	Mower repair			£	399.69	£	66.61			
Not yet paid	Staff costs	N/A	Staff Costs - June/July			£	479.46			£	22,349.80	
Closing balance												

2024/25 P&L (Adjusted for VAT) - As at July 2024

<u>Income</u>		YTD (Actual) Gross	YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget	Full year forecast	Variance
Precept Income		6,489	6,489	12,978	12,978	0
	Parish Field Rent	0	0	500	0	
	Wayleave Income	0	0	17	17	
	Grant income	2,145	2,145	0	2,145	
	VAT Reclaim	1,655	1,655	0	-	
Other Income		3,800	3,800	517	2,162	1,645
Total Income		10,289	10,289	13,495	15,140	1,645
<u>Outgoings</u>						
Employment Costs	Staff Costs	1,312	1,312	4,805		
		1,312	1,312	4,805	4,805	0
	Village Hall Hire	36	36	90		
	Payroll fees	16	13	110		
	ICO - Annual Data Protection	0	0	35		
	Memberships	0	0	105		
	Admin	0	0	50		
	Clerk Expenses	0	0	50		
	Internal Audit	155	155	150		
	Website running cost	0	0	200		
Admin		207	204	790	790	0
Insurance	Insurance	1,281	1,281	1,500	1,281	219
	Smockers	472	406	800		
	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	600	600	0		
	Grounds maintenance - Central	1,500	1,500	3,390		
	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	5,148	4,290	200		
	Play Area Inspection	187	156	160		
	Streetlights: Maint	0	0	0		
	Streetlights: Elect	399	380	800		
Highways and open spaces		8,307	7,332	5,350	9,440	-4,090
		0	0			
Grants out		0	0	550	550	0
	Contingency	0	0			
Miscellaneous		0	0	500	500	0
Total Outgoings		11,106	10,129	13,495	17,366	-3,871
Year To Date Net P&L		-817	160	0		-2,226

Funded by reserves, grant income, and ward fu

2024/25 - Balance - July 2024

Natwest Current Account Current Balance (Forecast)

£
28,028

Allocation of Balance Sheet

BRA Reserve

4,217

Set aside

Asset Maintenance reserve

13,910

General reserve (Balancing figure)

9,901

Unallocated

VAT refund due in (Approximation)

969

To be reclaimed