



Minutes of the meeting of BLETSOE PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 26th November 2024 at 7.30pm in Bletsoe Village Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Clare Goduti (Chair), Alison Field-Foster, Peter Margrave, Claire Woodward, Sue Binks, Philip Greetham, Borough Cllr Martin Towler, David Brough (Clerk), and 10 members of the public.

1 Public Open Session:

- Members of the public: Residents issues covered topics such as the clearing of ditches for flood reasons, cutting back of hedges on the A6, the proposed Bourne End speed limit reduction, and broadband issues.
- Borough Councillor Martin Towler was available for questions and briefly spoke about the ongoing response to the Cleat Hill incident and that the pilot for glass bottle recycling in domestic wheelie bins was expanding to include more villages.

2 Apologies for Absence accepted: Mark Abraham (Prior commitment).

3 Declarations of interest in items on the agenda: Cllr Greetham declared an interest in item 6 (Financial Matters – Approval of payments) due to his Grounds Maintenance company appearing on the payments list. Cllr Greetham was granted a dispensation on the item of Financial Matters for future meetings until the end of the 4-year term; it was considered to be to the benefit of the parish that Cllr Greetham remains in the room to discuss and vote, and therefore remain knowledgeable, on financial matters affecting the parish council.

4 To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 24th September 2024.

Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting as an accurate record.

5 Clerk's report on actions

- Car parking issue on the informal layby on Coplowe Lane: Clerk met BBC Highways on site – they are considering blocking off the layby to backfill and re-seed it, to return it to its former state as a verge.
- Bourne End Lane speed limit reduction: BBC Highways have acknowledged this and added it to their list of similar requests. They have no budget for this in the current financial year.
- Ditch clearance on Coplowe Lane: Parish council ditch (along the New Parish Field) has been cleared. BBC Highways are contacting Bedfordia to request the clearance of their ditches along the road. BBC Highways also agreed to carry out an inspection of the gullies following surface water flooding in September.
- Update on filling the tenancy for grazing on the Old Parish Field: the land had been advertised but no interested parties wished to take up the lease. Advertising will continue.

6 Financial Matters

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

The payments listed in the appendix were approved. The financial reports were reviewed.

- *To discuss the budget and precept setting for 2025/26*

The clerk showed a draft budget with in line with current annual costs. It was apparent that the budget, and therefore the precept, would need to increase to accommodate the costs of employing contractors to cut the New Parish Field due to a reduction in volunteers. The parish council will need to finalise the budget and precept figures in the January meeting.

7 Full Fibre Broadband

Proposal from Cllr Binks: To share any updates related to obtaining improved broadband in Bletsoe.

Cllr Binks explained that the QR code that residents can use to express an interest to Openreach for faster broadband, only had 17 hits. Openreach will not state what level of interest would instigate them moving

forward with higher-speed broadband, but Cllr Binks will keep pushing for an answer. Cllr Binks will also approach MP Richard Fuller for assistance, along with contacting other broadband providers.

8 Rights of Way

Proposal from Cllr Field-Foster: To consider any Rights of Way that need reporting for being impassable.

It was noted that footpaths 1, 6, 12 and 16 in Bletsoe did not meet one, or all, of the below requirements for a Right of Way as per the Highways Act 1980, and it was agreed to report this to the borough council Rights of Way team:

- It's no longer "reasonably convenient for the exercise of a public right of way" as you would soon get bogged down in ploughed mud and the crops/tufts of grass are a trip hazard.
- The footpath is not "made good... to not less than its minimum width"
- The landowner has not "indicated the line of the path or way on the ground to not less than its minimum width so that it is apparent to members of the public wishing to use it".

9 Drain clearing and pavement sweeping

Proposal from Cllr Woodward: To consider any drains (gullies) that are blocked and need clearing and sweeping of The Avenue – how to make this more regular.

Action: Clerk to request the borough council to clear blocked gullies on The Avenue and Memorial Lane. Street sweeping had already been requested by the Clerk.

10 Planning applications

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

APPLICATION NO: 24/02230/FUL Full Planning Application

PROPOSAL: Two storey rear extension, single storey side extension following the removal of entrance porch & front living room and external alterations and remodelling to the front façade to include reinstated front dormers, plinth brick, green oak front porch and chimney.

LOCATION : Fernleigh Cottage Bourne End Lane Bletsoe Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 1QS

It was **resolved** to provide support for this application; the application was considered appropriate for its location.

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

Status: Awaiting decision.

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

Action: Clerk to ensure that the parish council's previous response had a request for a condition to be added, should the application be approved, that no verge parking be allowed.

11 Annual NJC pay scale adjustment

- **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. Members of the public left the meeting.
- *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 2024-25; to be implemented (backdated) from 1 April 2024. Clerk contract is tied to this salary scale.*
It was **resolved** to implement the new payscales and backdate it to 1st April 2024.

12 Business for future agendas – for noting only

No confirmed proposals from councillors.

Date of next meeting: 29th January 2025 – Bletsoe Village Hall

Date Paid	Category	Payee/Payer	Desc	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	VAT	Cashbook Balance	Bank balance
Natwest									
08/10/2024	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH				£ 12.00			
09/10/2024	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH				£ 6.00			
14/10/2024	Streetlights: Elect	NPower				£ 169.78	£ 66.61		
14/10/2024	Smockers	S Binks	Expenses: Key Safe & Petrol			£ 64.41			
28/10/2024	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	K C PICKERING	BPC007			£ 200.00			
28/10/2024	Admin	RBL	Remembrance wreath			£ 19.99			
28/10/2024	Grounds maintenance - Central	H and G	MG033			£ 375.00			
18/11/2024	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	K C PICKERING	BPC008			£ 200.00			
18/11/2024	Smockers	Agriplant	Ditch clearance			£ 60.00			
22/11/2024	Grounds maintenance - Central	H and G	MG034			£ 375.00			£ 24,491.78
NotYetPaid	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	D Brough	Expenses: Old Parish Field padlock			£ 29.99	£ 5.00		
NotYetPaid	Staff costs	Multiple				£ 832.26		£ 23,629.53	
Closing balance									

2024/25 - Balance - Nov 2024

Natwest Current Account Current Balance (Forecast)

£
23,630

Allocation of Balance Sheet

BRA Reserve

4,217

Set aside

Asset Maintenance reserve

13,910

General reserve (Balancing figure)

5,502

Unallocated

VAT refund due in (Approximation)

1,041

To be reclaimed

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

<u>Income</u>		YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget	Full year forecast	Variance
Precept Income		12,978	12,978	12,978	0
	Parish Field Rent	0	500	0	
	Wayleave Income	18	17	17	
	Grant income	2,145	0	2,145	
	VAT Reclaim	1,655	0	-	
Other Income		3,818	517	3,818	3,301
Total Income		16,796	13,495	16,796	3,301
<u>Outgoings</u>					
Employment Costs		3,329	4,805		
	Staff Costs	3,329	4,805	4,805	0
	Village Hall Hire	66	90		
	Payroll fees	39	110		
	ICO - Annual Data Protection	0	35		
	Memberships	105	105		
	Admin	20	50		
	Clerk Expenses	0	50		
	Internal Audit	155	150		
	Website running cost	0	200		
Admin		385	790	790	0
Insurance		1,281	1,500	1,281	219
	Smockers	530	800		
	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	1,600	0		
	Grounds maintenance - Central	3,000	3,390		
	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	4,315	200		
	Play Area Inspection	156	160		
	Streetlights: Maint	0	0		
	Streetlights: Elect	484	800		
Highways and open spaces		10,085	5,350	10,640	-5,290
					£3245 offset with grant income
Grants out		0	550	550	0
	Old Parish Field - deposit refund	200			
Miscellaneous		200	500	500	0
Total Outgoings		15,279	13,495	18,566	-5,071
Year To Date Net P&L		1,517	0		-1,769