



Minutes of the meeting of BLETSOE PARISH COUNCIL held on Tuesday 25th March 2025 at 7.30pm in Bletsoe Village Hall.

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Clare Goduti (Chair), Alison Field-Foster, Mark Abraham, Peter Margrave, , Sue Binks, Philip Greetham, Borough Cllr Martin Towler, Mayor Tom Wootton, David Brough (Clerk), and 11 members of the public.

1 Public Open Session:

- Members of the public: Residents spoke in relation to requested amendments to the bus timetable and in relation to the smell from muck spreading, which had become unusually pungent and over a far longer period than previously. Borough Councillor Martin Towler agreed to take these points forward with the residents.
- Borough Councillor Martin Towler: No items of note, but Martin was available for answering any questions.

2 Apologies for Absence accepted: Claire Woodward (Work commitment).

3 Declarations of interest in items on the agenda: None.

4 To approve the minutes of the parish council meeting held on 29th January 2025.

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: BBC Highways completed the work to block off the layby with concrete blocks, in order to return it to its former state as a verge.
- Drainage Coplowe Lane: BBC Highways have placed an order to carry out an inspection of the gullies following surface water flooding in September. This is expected later in the year as it can't be done when the gullies are full of water.
- Drainage The Avenue/New Parish Field pond: Following a commitment from the Mayor at the January meeting, the Clerk met the BBC Flood Officer and BBC Highways on site. The agreement was for an investigation to be carried out from the pond to The Avenue, and to inspect the gullies along a section of The Avenue, to determine the route of flow and to check for blockages. Expected to be carried out in coordination with the Coplowe Lane inspection.
- Clearance of footpath running alongside the A6: Following the cutting back of the hedges along this route, the borough council completed the clearing/widening of the footpath that had plant growth and debris on it.
- Update on filling the tenancy for grazing on the Old Parish Field: a tenant has now been found for the field, which is now in use for grazing.
- "Dogs On Leads" PSPO for the New Parish Field: BBC team are currently carrying out a consultation in relation to the parish council's request to make the field "Dogs On Leads". Following that, it will need to follow a legal process and then be approved by the borough council's Executive.

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 noted. Cllr Goduti noted that the parish council would welcome the opportunity to discuss the recent budget and precept increase with any residents who had concerns.

7 **Grounds maintenance**

a) *Ongoing review of the approach for mowing the New Parish Field (behind the village hall)*

Cllr Binks explained that a new rota was being created, but additional volunteers were still needed. A poster will be shared on the village Facebook group to encourage participation. It was noted that the more volunteers there are, the fewer paid cuts will be required. As the village fete is taking place in September this year, it was agreed that the additional cut usually carried out in June could be omitted.

b) *To consider actions regarding the bin in the Memorial Garden, which is no longer being emptied*

It was noted that the bin was not the responsibility of the borough council to empty, and that their current policy is not to adopt new bins to their rounds. It was agreed that dog waste is not considered an acceptable type of waste for disposal in this open bin. It was therefore **resolved** to remove the bin.

8 **Highways & Rights of Way issues**

a) *To discuss parking issues at the unofficial layby on Coplowe Lane and consider requesting No Verge Parking, or alternative solution, from BBC Highways*

Resolved to request No Verge Parking restrictions for the T-junction.

b) *To consider measures to stop large vehicles using Coplowe Lane as a shortcut*

BBC Highways advised that residents should record dates, times, and vehicle descriptions of any vehicles exceeding the 7.5-tonne weight limit that are using the road as a cut-through. This information can be passed to the Clerk, who will collate the reports and forward them to BBC Highways for follow-up with the relevant companies

c) *To consider requesting BBC Highways to install a "Caution: Turning Lorries" sign at the Milton Road junction, in line with a similar request from Thurleigh Parish Council, to warn drivers about slurry lorries accessing the field*

Resolved to support Thurleigh Parish Council by making the same request for signage.

d) *Proposal from Cllr Field-Foster: To request that the Borough Council establish a Rights of Way Policy outlining how and under what circumstances they will enforce the Highways Act to maintain passable footpaths*

It was agreed that Cllr Field-Foster would prepare a motion to submit to the borough council, requesting the development of a policy that provides clarity and transparency regarding when action will or will not be taken under the Highways Act.

9 **Victory in Europe (VE) day – 80th anniversary**

Proposal from Cllr Goduti: To consider whether the parish council should host or support an event to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE day in May 2025.

It was agreed that Cllr Goduti would liaise with residents interested in holding an event. No parish council expenditure was approved, as it was felt that residents could bring their own picnics to an event.

10 **Full Fibre Broadband**

Proposal from Cllr Binks: To receive updates on efforts to improve broadband provision in Bletsoe.

Cllr Binks reported that she has received an initial response from Openreach, via MP Richard Fuller's office, regarding fibre broadband provision in Bletsoe. While some properties already have access to Fibre to the Premises (FTTP), there are currently no immediate plans for wider rollout, as the village is considered too small to be prioritized in current delivery programmes. Residents are encouraged to continue to register their interest to Openreach online.

11 **Defibrillator code sharing**

To consider a request to share the box code for the defibrillator located at the village hall.

It was agreed not to share the code, due to concerns about the risk of the code becoming widely known, and the inability to monitor when the defibrillator had been used and ensure it is restocked.

12 **Wedding parking**

Proposal from Cllr Greetham: To consider permitting the use of the New Parish Field for parking in connection with a wedding reception.

It was agreed to allow parking on the field for this event on 26th July 2025.

13 **Planning applications**

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

APPLICATION NO: 25/00311/FUL Full Planning Application

PROPOSAL: Single storey extension to existing garage.

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

Resolved not to comment or object to this application.

APPLICATION NO: 25/00332/LBC Listed Building Consent Application

PROPOSAL: Internal alterations forming larger bathroom and new en suite to the first floor

LOCATION : Gilbert Cottage North End Bletsoe Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 1QT

Resolved not to comment or object to this application.

- *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

14 **Business for future agendas (for noting only)**

No items were raised for future meetings.

Date of next meeting: 27th May 2025 – Bletsoe Village Hall (Annual meetings)

Payments and receipts - Mar 2025

Date Paid	Category	Payee/Payer	Desc	Transfers	Receipts	Payments Gross	VAT	Cashbook Balance	Bank balance
Natwest Current								£ 22,513.84	£ 22,513.84
03/02/2025	VAT Reclaim	HMRC			£ 1,051.84				
05/02/2025	Parish Field Rent & Deposit	JD			£ 300.00				
10/02/2025	ICO - Annual Data Protection	ICO				£ 35.00			
10/02/2025	Parish Field Rent & Deposit	JD			£ 500.00				
17/02/2025	Savings Transfer	BPC Unity Trust	Transfer into Savings Acct	-£21,000.00					£ 3,330.68
Not Yet Paid	Payroll fees	Red Shoes	Qtrly payroll fees			£ 31.20	£ 5.20		
Not Yet Paid	Grounds maintenance - Central	H and G	MG036						
Not Yet Paid	Staff costs	D Brough	Feb/Mar Net & Qtrly PAYE			£ 1,184.61			
Not Yet Paid	Village Hall Hire	Bletsoe VH				£ 12.00			
Closing balance								£ 2,102.87	
Natwest Savings									
Opening balance								£ -	£ -
17/02/2025	Savings Transfer	BPC Unity Trust	Transfer from Current Acct	£21,000.00					
Closing balance								£ 21,000.00	£ 21,000.00

2024/25 - Balance - Mar 2025

Natwest Current Account (Forecast)
Unity Trust Savings (2.25%)

£	
£	2,103
£	21,000
£	23,103

Allocation of Balance Sheet

BRA Reserve	4,217	Set aside
Asset Maintenance reserve	13,910	
General reserve (Balancing figure)	4,976	Unallocated
VAT refund due in (Approximation)	0	

2024/25 P&L (Adjusted for VAT) - As at Mar 2025

<u>Income</u>		YTD (Actual) Gross	YTD (Actual) Net	Annual Budget	Full year forecast	Variance
Precept Income		12,978	12,978	12,978	12,978	0
	Parish Field Rent & Deposit	800	800	500	800	
	Wayleave Income	18	18	17	18	
	Grant income	2,145	2,145	0	2,145	
	VAT Reclaim	2,707	0	0	-	
Other Income		5,670	2,963	517	2,963	2,446
Total Income		18,648	15,941	13,495	15,941	2,446
<u>Outgoings</u>						
Employment Costs	Staff Costs	4,994	4,994	4,805		
		4,994	4,994	4,805	4,994	-189
	Village Hall Hire	102	102	90		
	Payroll fees	94	78	110		
	ICO - Annual Data Protection	35	35	35		
	Memberships	105	105	105		
	Admin	20	20	50		
	Clerk Expenses	0	0	50		
	Internal Audit	155	155	150		
	Website running cost	100	100	200		
Admin		611	595	790	595	195
Insurance	Insurance	1,281	1,281	1,500	1,281	219
	Smockers	597	530	800		
	Grounds maintenance - New Parish Field	1,600	1,600	0		
	Grounds maintenance - Central	3,195	3,195	3,390		
	Repairs/Maintenance/Capital Exp	5,262	4,399	200		
	Play Area Inspection	187	156	160		
	Streetlights: Maint	0	0	0		
	Streetlights: Elect	787	701	800		
Highways and open spaces		11,627	10,581	5,350	10,640	-5,290
		0	0			
Grants out		0	0	550	550	0
Miscellaneous	Old Parish Field - deposit refund	200	200			
		200	200	500	200	300
Total Outgoings		18,712	17,650	13,495	18,259	-4,764
Year To Date Net P&L		-64	-1,709	0		-2,318

£3245 offset with grant income