

Meeting: Annual Meeting of Electors
24th May 2023 at 8:00pm

Council Cllr Jon Abbott (JA)
Members in Cllr. Thomas Beazley (TB)
attendance: Cllr. Gareth D'Cruze (GD)
Cllr. Sara Darlow (SD)
Cllr. Caroline O'Neill (CO)
Cllr. David Smith (DS)

Apologies received: Cllr. Katie Sharpe

Non-attendance:

Borough Council Cllr. Doug McMurdo (DM)
Member:

Clerk to the Rosemary Plum (RP)
Council:

Public 13 residents
Attendance

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

- Cllr. Katie Sharp

2. Declarations of Interest

- None reported.

3. Minutes of Meeting 2022

JA & TB only members present at this meeting who were at the meeting last year.

Proposal to accept minutes of 2022 meeting.

Proposed: Cllr Jon Abbott

Seconded: Cllr Sara Darlow

4. Matters Arising from Minutes of 2022 Meeting *(for information only)*

- I. Similar issues encountered year on year
- II. Parish Council still monitoring the situation at Close Road. Residents feel it's a disgrace and Parish Council will make contact with BPHA to find out when they're likely to start.
- III. Drainage issues still not resolved although there are initial proposals from

the Borough Council.

- IV. Parish Council is aware the footpath across the Moors has been virtually impassable. Borough Footpaths Officer has brokered agreement with landowners concerned. Not clear whether English Nature are in agreement to get a derogation to move the footpath to the route everybody is now walking. Parish Council believes a derogation will be put in place to move to the footpath being walked regularly. Landowners signed the necessary forms and Footpaths Officer has signed on behalf of Bedford Borough but English Nature now claim they haven't received anything. As far as the Parish Council is aware, English Nature don't want the move as this is the part of the footpath they're trying to preserve. In reality, tens of thousands of pounds would be required to fund the ideal solution that we all want but we have to be satisfied with the deal we've been able to broker so far.
- V. A resident enquired if it would be possible to have a book exchange for the village. Parish Council has put in an application for listed building status for the phone box which could house the book exchange as well as the defibrillator.
- VI. Morlock sign is being moved to new posts in the centre of the village.
- VII. DS has taken over Highways and Traffic management He has spoken with RT at Stevington who is up to speed with this equipment.
- VIII. We want to understand the scale of the speeding in the village with a view to presenting to the Borough Council to formulate traffic policies.
- IX. There may be consideration for Borough Council to add a pole along the strait between Pavenham and Oakley.
- X. We need to consider Health & Safety when climbing traffic sign poles and lifting the weight at height.
- XI. There should be 2 flashing signs along the strait that belong to the Borough. One never worked and the other was swapped for our Morlock sign.
- XII. Signs flashing with such regularity, the batteries don't last more than 10 days.
- XIII. We have been waiting 18mnths for new signs from the Borough which have been on order for 12 months.
- XIV. We should consider Police and Crime Commissioner intervention with support for combatting speeding.
- XV. How big is the problem in our Parish? Can we see the data on a regular basis? RP to ask Borough for data to be sent monthly.

5. Chairman's Report

- I. The report has been distributed to all residents.
- II. Thanks to all Parish Councillors, especially those newly elected who attended their first meeting last Wednesday.
- III. We have received a nice email from resident on the mobile home site advising there's a defibrillator on the site. It appears that it's currently for use of the mobile home park residents only however, it's shown on the map and the Chair of the Association has no objection to any

resident using it.

- IV. TB introduced new Clerk, RP saying the appointment is a great success for the Councillors and Chair.
- V. Councillors may be contacted directly by residents and the Clerk should be copied into all correspondence.
- VI. All Councillors were asked by the Chair to give a brief introduction to themselves and their role.
- VII. It was noted that several people who support the Parish are never formally thanked for their efforts. These include: SD for the Coronation events, Roy Bates for Bus Shelter maintenance, Bob and Bet Scoley for War Memorial maintenance, Tony Talbot who cuts the grass and helps maintain certain areas of the village.

6. Parish Council Finances

The clerk reported the following:

- I. A sum of £2,100 is still due as a contribution to the Village Hall.
- II. The annual budget for Village Hall contribution has been reduced from £3,500 to £3,000 for 2023-24
- III. There has been a large increase in the parish precept this year. Over the years the Parish Council has tried to keep precept as low as possible and has been one of the lowest in Bedfordshire for many years.
- IV. We keep reserves low to ensure we can keep entitlement to grant funding.
- V. We should keep the equivalent of one and a half years precept in reserve and we are currently struggling to do that.
- VI. It has been necessary to increase the annual precept this year in order to balance the books.
- VII. The Parish Council gave assurance it will contain spending as best it can and do its utmost to not increase the precept as much next year.
- VIII. It is forecast that the Neighbourhood Development Plan will require a cash injection to get it through the final hurdle. For the moment, the Parish Council has allowed £5k for NDP and services of professionals as required.
- IX. Financial Report attached to these minutes.

6a. Village Hall Finances

- I. Lettings increased by more than 50% since Covid and cricket club income increased however that was due to large water bill.
- II. £1800-£2000 receipts from tariffs.
- III. The last part of covid grant was awarded in January 2022
- IV. Heating and lighting costs haven't increased very much despite an increase in letting.
- V. Had to replace roof over the changing rooms leading to considerable expenditure out of funds accumulated at year end.

The Chair gave thanks to DS for his diligence throughout Covid and keeping the Village

Hall in existence for the residents throughout this difficult time.

7. Borough Council Report

- Boundary changes came into effect from 8th May 2023 which saw Pavenham move Ward from Oakley to Sharnbrook
- Election of new Mayor Tom Wootton on 8th May has changed the make-up of the council.
- Local Plan 2040 will be examined in June and new Mayor has spoken about reviewing it. If we don't have one, tilted balance kicks in and opens up the Borough to major planning and speculation. Need to be cautious in the way forward with this.
- Core council tax rise 0.99% with adult services addition bringing the rise to 2.99%
- The new Mayor has decided to run the new budget going forward and it went through full council almost unanimously in March 2023.
- Repairs on the local roads have finally happened. Although JA is no longer Borough Councillor, he has been pushing for road repairs for 4 years.
- The Borough has significantly improved its planning performance in the past year and is comfortably above the targets set by Government.
- Borough is one of the top in the country for planning enforcement, action is being taken. For a relatively small council, Bedford is performing really well.
- Borough Cllr Doug McMurdo has issues around the local plan and feels the announcement for review is worrying. Has called for a meeting with the Mayor and planning team. He is fighting for local plan which he feels we really need to keep.
- Money has been tight in 2022-23 and continues to be a really big challenge.
- Staff costs increasing by 9% across the Borough establishment.

8. Questions from the Floor

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| I. | Yet again, the grass at the top end of Close Road hasn't been cut. BPHA garages are now all empty and it's a complete mess. TB/JA will discuss further. | TB/JA |
| II. | Can we look into the plans for the garages? An amendment has been submitted. | TB |
| III. | The cutting of the grass in the churchyard has been done very badly although it has been done well in previous years. It was noted the weather has been very wet resulting in large amounts of grass being dealt with in recent cuts. The matter will be discussed with the contractor. | TB |
| IV. | Why is the Neighbourhood Development Plan taking so long to complete. The Chair advised it was suspended during the Covid period and the | |

Questionnaire to all Parish residents now has to be renewed. It is anticipated this will be distributed in June 2023. The Borough appointed person to carry out the Ecological Survey has since retired and funds have been allocated to cover the cost of an independent survey.

- V. The Borough is happy with our policies as laid down in our draft NDP.
- VI. No gulley clearing has been undertaken in The Bury for more than three years. Gulleys outside the White House cleared just before Xmas, and again a couple of months ago. TB has just emptied them again. RP
- VII. Thanks given to DS for an excellent patching job which is much appreciated.
- VIII. It was decided in May 2023 that salt bins were not required to be purchased for The Bury. Should we buy more and where should they be placed? Bin near the noticeboard would be a good place. Already one at the top of the Bury.
- IX. Is the salt bin at the top of Mill Lane filled for the winter? Borough fill them around September. One was requested for Orchard Close but where could it be put to not be intrusive? Could we have a green one rather than yellow?
- X. Questions raised about grass cutting in The Orchard. Some residents are complaining about the lack of mowing however 'No Mow May' to protect wildflowers may have been applied to this area.

9. Thanks given to everybody in attendance for their support.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 9:30pm

Signed as a true reflection of the meeting:

Signed	
Dated	19 th July 2023

Chair