

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5th September 2023 in the Village Hall

PRESENT: R Saunders, (Chair), J. Abbott, C Bays, P. Jones, P. Olney, T. Saunders, J Walker, P. White, C Worker, the Clerk, Mrs. Paice and 6 members of the public

1. Public Open Session:

Resident asked for an update on yellow lines at The Furlong and whether anyone had been fined for parking on other yellow lines in the village. If not, the original suggestion of wooden bollards would be more effective – see item 12a) Residents x 5 were concerned about the new development off the High Street and tabled a traffic analysis carried out by a road traffic inspector. The access was opposite a listed building at the narrowest point in the High Street, the entrance road was very narrow, there was no footway alongside the Bedford Arms and a bus box on the road nearby. There had already been accidents near the proposed entrance and additional traffic would therefore affect the wider area. Drainage was also a serious problem and the field was too wet for construction traffic. The drains in Westfield Road and the High Street were insufficient and surrounding properties had flooded in the past. The development site was a haven for wildlife which would be displaced and a resident asked if ecology surveys had been carried out. Residents thanked Council for the update letter following the meeting with the agents and asked why the number of properties had been increased from 10 to 13 and if the site could be removed from the Neighbourhood Plan as the recent successful appeal for Station Road made the additional housing unnecessary – see item 18b).

2. Apologies: Cllr. Fardon (personal), R. Worker (personal)

3. Declarations of Interest:

Cllrs. Jones & T Saunders for item 7a) as Council representatives to ORA and Cllr. Bays as a relative of the ORA Chair. Cllr. C Worker for item 11 as a resident of Parsonage Close. Cllr. Abbott for item 12a) as a resident of The Furlong. Cllr. R Saunders for item 17b) as an affected landowner. Cllr. Walker for item 20c) as a relative of an allotment tenant.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th July 2023 :

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

5. Clerk's Report:

Highways – Clerk had reported the poor condition of the footway in Station Road, blocked drains in Station Road and the High Street and overgrown vegetation in the Lincroft/Station Road alleyway to Bedford BC and orders had been raised to repair/clear.

Bedford BC had removed the damaged fence overhanging alleyway between Dewlands & Ruffs Furze onto the owner’s property and Highways had been asked to inspect and repair the damage to the twin bridges. Clerk had asked residents in the High Street to cut back overgrown hedges and they had been trimmed and had also requested Bedfordia trim the Highfield Road hedge. Overhanging trees and the encroaching verge on Church Lane footway near the twin bridges had been reported to Bedford BC who had cut them back. Northbound A6 would be closed until 27.10.23.

Speed Cameras – no information available for June, July & August & Cllr. Abbott was pursuing with Bedford BC

JA

Speed Watch – there were nil return for events 28.06.23 in Pavenham Road, 11.07.23. in Reynes Drive & 19.07.23. in Lovell Road.

Bus stops– Bedford BC had advised that a DDA compliant bus stop could not be provided in Lovell Road without significant funding because of the narrow verge and proximity of the ditch

Fly tipping– rubbish dumped at Stevington Country Walk bottle bank reported to Bedford BC who had removed.

Community Litter Pick – to be held 16.09.23. meeting at 10.00am at Oakley Sports & Social Club (OSSC). Equipment would be provided by Bedford BC and OSSC would offer free bacon rolls to those taking part .

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting 4th July 2023: none

Action

7. Reports:

Action

a) ORA Committee Meeting 18.07.23.

Cllrs. Jones, T Saunders & R Worker attended. Representatives from ORA, AFC Oakley and Oakley Motorcycle Club provided updates on their organisations. The boules pitch had been repaired and Changing Rooms and football pitches would be refurbished during the Summer. Lack of interest in young peoples’ cricket & rounders during the Summer had resulted in its cancellation and there had been no interest in using the tennis court. OSSC membership was now 1,223. The Motorcycle and Football Club were continuing to be successful with large sums raised for the East of England Air Ambulance by the Motorcycle Club and strong focus being placed on the development of female football.

Council’s remit included provision of resident feedback to the meeting and there would be a standing agenda item entitled Resident Feedback Received by the Parish Council. Council passed on concerns raised by a resident and ORA requested that residents be asked to forward concerns directly to them in the first instance and only involve Council or other bodies if agreement could not be reached. Council to advise resident. ORA noted that a constructive meeting had been held with Council on 01.06.23. Cllr. Fardon had also provided an update setting out the roles of both Council and ORA in the September Newsletter.

Chair noted that fireworks had been cancelled this year as parking was not available at Lincroft.

b) Network Meeting 20.07.23.

Cllr. Jones reported that the meeting was well attended and the Mayor answered previously submitted questions. He noted that staff shortages and the budget deficit were challenging. The Borough was trying to improve the bus station and gullies would be cleaned every 2 years. Proceedings would be taken against Network Rail, if necessary, to try and get the flooding under Lovell Road bridge resolved and Bedford BC would also pursue posting flood warnings on the Borough website & Facebook pages. Enquiries with Anglian Water regarding river pollution indicated that water leaving the cleansing stations was clear, so it was more likely to be environmental issues causing pollution. New planning officers had been recruited and it was hoped to speed up the service. Speeding was an issue for most parishes and it was suggested that parishes collate speed data in the same way. Provision of services on new developments was also a concern and the Borough would put more pressure on developers to provide doctors surgeries etc. and make new buildings environmentally sustainable. Bedford BC requested topics for future discussion and Oakley suggested the role of Neighbourhood Plans and the weight given to them.

Cllr. Walker noted that Network Rail had agreed to complete the work needed at Lovell Road bridge this year but if no date was forthcoming the Borough would serve a legal notice to ensure it was carried out.

8. East West Rail (EWR):

Local Representatives' meeting 25.07.23.

Cllr. Olney reported that EWR was in the process of planning engagement for the statutory consultation, which was expected in the first half of 2024. The consultation would last 8 – 12 weeks and EWR would try and avoid school holidays. The process for the statutory consultation and submission of the Development Consent Order process was discussed and BFARE was still protesting against the northern route. EWR provided further information on the new Tempsford alignment and confirmed that the line had moved further away from Wilden. EWR confirmed that the Bedford to Cambridge section had the capacity for four freight train movements per day. The next meeting would discuss methods of engagement with local communities.

Action

9. Police Report:

PC Jones and PCSO Dancer had visited Methodist Coffee Morning 20.07.23. and the event was well attended.

Action

They answered questions, requested attendees fill in a questionnaire and distributed various security items including credit card protection containers, protection marker pens, number plate security screws, rape alarms and purse bells. They also left advice leaflets on crime prevention.

There were 9 reported crimes in June, 2 assaults without injury, 1 assault with injury 1 harassment, 1 public fear offence, 1 theft by an employee, 1 theft from a vehicle, 1 other theft and 1 criminal damage to a vehicle; 1 sexual offence in July and 2 reported offences in August, 1 assault without injury and 1 arson not endangering life.

Concerns had been raised about drug taking at the Village Hall, Old School and churchyard. Councillors had repeatedly reported to police and would continue to do so.

10. Grass Cutting:

Concerns had continued to be raised about the standard of grass cutting particularly on the Green. Clerk had repeatedly asked for mowing and strimming to be carried out at the same time but lack of staff was a problem and work was still haphazard. Council to consider at October meeting asking for another discount for the second quarter.

Action

Clerk

11. Parsonage Close shrubs:

Resident had requested shrubs on the Parsonage Close green be trimmed. Trees surgeon had quoted £50 (no VAT) to carry out the work. Clerk noted that residents had commented on tree surgeon's high standard of work on the Green and in Parsonage Close.

Proposed by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. White that the quotation for £50.00 be accepted

Resolved

Cllr. White noted that some of the bollards on the Green were rotten and he had removed them but their removal would not permit unauthorised access.

Action

12. Highway Matters:

a) double yellow lines in The Furlong

Bedford BC had advised that bollards and H bars would not resolve the parking issues and suggested double yellow lines. Council was still awaiting a formal proposal from Highways and Cllr. Abbott had continued to chase. Bedford BC had now promised a proposal by the end of September and he would pursue with the new portfolio holder. Cllr. Walker noted that yellow lines were enforced. If vehicles parking on them were reported to Parking Services they would ticket offenders.

Action

JA

b) parking in the High Street

Bedford BC had met with Cllr. Abbott to discuss parking opposite the High Street bungalows as parked vehicles were causing difficulties for the residents of the bungalows exiting their properties. An over-sized H-bar had already been marked but extending it would not be permitted in the regulations. Bedford BC advised that the best method to stop parking would be yellow lines and as the problem was mostly during business hours, time restricted lines could be installed. However, these would likely move the problem further along the High Street or into Reynes Drive. Councillors noted that the nearby business did encourage clients to use their car park but agreed to ask Bedford BC for a proposal for yellow lines. Parking at the Reynes Drive/Station Road junction was also a problem and Council agreed to request a proposal for this site too. Cllr. Abbott to pursue.

JA

13. Questions for the Mayor's visit to October Council:

Mayor would be attending the October Council meeting and Cllr. Fardon had asked to discuss the weighting given to Neighbourhood Plans by the Planning Committee. Council also agreed to ask about the Borough position on EWR as a residents' meeting was being held in Clapham in October. Councillors to forward any further questions to Clerk and Clerk to forward to Mayor's office.

ActionALL
Clerk**14. Monthly Parish Council Quiz:**

First quiz would be held at the Village Hall on Friday 15.09.23. and had been advertised on the website, Facebook and notice boards. There would be six members per team at a cost of £3.00 per person (cash only) and tickets would be issued on the night. 16 teams had been entered to date and Council thanked Cllrs. C & R Worker for organising.

Action**15. Defibrillator Awareness Course:**

Cllr. T Saunders noted that Sharnbrook PC was holding a defibrillator awareness course and suggested that Council run one. Air Ambulance had advised that training could be provided free of charge, sessions were around an hour and a minimum of 6 participants would be required. Sessions would cover the difference between cardiac arrest and heart attack, how to recognise a cardiac arrest, calling emergency services, starting CPR and using a community defibrillator. Councillors suggested a Saturday morning and Clerk to suggest 23.09.23, 07.10.23, 14.10.23. or 18.11.23. to Air Ambulance.

Action

Clerk

16. Borough Councillor's Report:

Cllr. Walker reported that the new leisure contract had been put out to tender. The Fusion contract finished at the end of January 2024 and a decision on the new contract would be made in October. A new Town Centre vision would be discussed by the Executive in September and a new leisure strategy in November.

Action

The Rural Affairs Committee had been abolished as it had met rarely. Rural grants were still available with no change to the conditions and application was now via an online form with decisions made immediately. The police station had been sold and the Greyfriars regeneration would include shops and cafes on the ground floor and flats above. Given the national issue with RAAC concrete, Bedford BC had visually surveyed all the state schools in the Borough and all were safe. More detailed surveys were being carried out on some buildings. Bedford Modern School had serious safety issues and the Borough was assisting them. Cones had been moved on the A6 roundabout to try and reduce the delays whilst the A6 north was closed.

Cllr. Abbott added that the Borough was reviewing the timing of the traffic lights on the A6 roundabouts and putting signage in Bromham to discourage HGVs using Oakley bridges as an alternative route. He noted that the twin bridges were due to be closed completely during October half term for repair. Chair thanked Cllrs. Abbott and Walker for their help with the problems caused by the A6 works.

17. Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:

Decisions notified since Council meeting – 4th July 2023

Application No. **23/01057/FUL** - new hard standing play space located on existing soft play area at Lincroft Academy

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 19.07.23.

Application No. **23/01047/LBC** - refurbishment of barn at Mallows, The Drive

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 08.08.23.

Application No. **23/01174/TPO** - remove deadwood from acacia & reshape lower canopy at Church Close, Church Lane

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 10.08.23.

Application No. **23/01373/TPO** - prune horse chestnut crown away from lawn/rear of house by 1-1.5 metres & thin remainder by 20% at 10 Brockwell

Parish Comments: No objection

Decision/Date: Permission 10.08.23.

Applications received since Council meeting – 4th July 2023

Application No. **a) 23/01047/LBC amended** - refurbishment of barn at Mallows, The Drive

Parish Comments: No objection

Application No.	b) 21/00332/EIA additional documents - for demolition of existing structures & outline permission with all matters reserved except for access for up to 500 residential dwellings, land for a new 2FE primary school and early years/childcare facilities at land off Milton Road, Clapham
Parish Comments	Amended documents included reference to a contribution by the developers towards a footway along Highfield Road although it would be for the Borough to construct. Council to maintain their previous objection on the grounds that the developer should fully fund and build the footway along Highfield Road.

18. Planning Policy:

a) Granting of planning appeal for 21/02394/MAO - up to 40 dwellings, vehicular and pedestrian access, green infrastructure including open space and landscaping, related drainage and other infrastructure works at land off Station Road

Appeal had been granted by the Planning Inspector on the grounds that the application did not conflict with the Bedford BC Local Plan. In addition, the public benefits provided by up to forty new dwellings, including a proportion of affordable housing, short-term employment in the construction industry and longer term support of local businesses, provision of public open green space and traffic management measures to reduce vehicular speeds in the vicinity of two schools would outweigh the risk of any less than substantial harm to heritage assets in the vicinity of the site. Cllr. Abbott noted that the reserved matters application could be heard by the Planning Committee.

b) meeting with agent for new development off High Street 15.08.23.

Council and Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) Group met representatives from the planning consultancy on 15.08.23. Council expressed disappointment and concern that the previous plan, which had indicated bungalows on the site, had changed to 13 two storey properties and emphasised that the village supported bungalows. Consultants agreed to discuss with the landowner. The housing mix would not be agreed at the initial outline planning application stage but Council/NDP Group made clear that they did not support the suggested layout. The consultants confirmed that the Public Open Space (POS) would not be moved in a later planning application and as part of the drainage system would include an attenuation pond/s. A 1.8m footway would be included along the left-hand side of the access road and Bedford BC would need to be assured that refuse vehicles could access and turn on the site. The consultants agreed to advise on the size of construction vehicles that could use the entrance road. Council/NDP Group also expressed views that the parking allowance would not be adequate.

The consultants were looking to submit an outline planning application in October and Council asked for them to re-engage with the Council/NDP Group before the application was submitted. Again, they agreed to discuss with the landowner. Council had sent a holding reply and requested a response to the points raised as soon as possible.

Council had also written to the Planning Department emphasising that the outline application the agents were expected to submit was not what the village wanted, the Housing Needs Survey carried out as part of the NDP process indicated that the additional housing was not needed in the village and Council/NDP Group did not support the indicative layout put forward. Planning Department had confirmed that the NDP would be given full weight when the application was being considered and would be content to meet once the application was submitted. The NDP Group had also written expressing their concerns and requesting a meeting.

Councillors noted that the site could not be withdrawn without a new NDP and that would take several years to produce; the number of properties had increased as the Planning Inspector had inserted "about" before the housing numbers in the NDP policies; environmental studies had been carried out and these would form part of the planning application and one developer considered the ground works required on the site would make it uneconomic. The decision on the planning application would be made by Bedford BC and residents should send objections to Planning once the application was circulated but these needed to be supported by fact. Residents could also attend and speak at the Planning Committee that would consider the application.

Council agreed to formally respond to consultants reiterating that they did not support 13 properties on the site or the suggested layout but did support up to 10 bungalows; the layout of the site should follow the design brief in the NDP and the constraints in the High Street should be carefully considered so that access, parking and turning was sufficient for residents and vehicles such as dustcarts.

Clerk

c) request from Staffordshire village that Council write to MP about weight given to Neighbourhood Plans by Planning Inspectors

Staffordshire village was concerned that a Planning Inspector's decision to allow a housing development that was in direct contravention of the "made" Chapel and Hill Chorlton, Maer and Aston, and Whitmore NDP could have national ramifications and requested parishes to write to their MPS. Clerk noted that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) could not demonstrate a 5 year land supply and the Neighbourhood Plan was over two years old so the conflict with LPA and NDP policies for the supply of housing and the spatial strategy carried limited weight in this instance.

Proposed by Cllr. Olney, seconded by Cllr. Jones that Council write to Mr. Fuller MP expressing concern that Council representations were not taken into account at the Station Road appeal

Resolved

Clerk

19. Correspondence:

resident request for review of weight limit/type of vehicle permitted to use twin bridges

Action

Following recent damage to the bridges by vehicles, resident had suggested that the weight limit and type of vehicle permitted to use twin bridges should be reviewed. Bedford BC was responsible for the bridges and Council agreed to ask them to review safety when carrying out the repairs in October and to consider installing a camera to monitor weight limits.

Clerk

18. Finance Matters:

Action

a) accounts for period up to 31st August 2023

Income and balances:

NatWest Bank - Current account balance at 31.08.23. £95,793.50

NatWest Bank – Business Reserve account balance at 31.08.23. £7,325.21

Nationwide - Savings Bond £61,006.43

Hampshire Trust - Savings Bond £85,013.20

Received since last meeting:

Frankland Allotment rent 1.00

Oak. Upholstery Directory advertising 40.00

Meth. Church Directory advertising 50.00

Bedford BC Grass cutting contribution 1712.33

NatWest Interest 8.22

Davis Allotment rent 19.00

NatWest Interest 8.71

Total £1,839.26

Payments Already Made:

**Chq.
No.**

Salaries July & August payment 2965.16 s/o

Paice Expenses April - June 205.59 1869

Youth Club S. 137 donation 3,000.00 1870

Pension Fund July payment 506.74 1871

Norris Repairing fence at The Furlong 576.00 1873

Bedford BC Quarterly grass cutting payment 2,594.92 1874

Tomkins Tree works throughout village 870.00 1875

Old School Hire of meeting room 25.05.23. 6.00 1876

Village Hall Hire of hall 15.08.23. 24.00 1877

Payments Made:

D M Payroll Services	Half year payroll administration	126.00	1878
CPRE	Membership renewal	36.00	1879
Bedfordshire Pension Fund	August payment	506.74	1880
Village Hall	Hire of Committee room 05.09.23.	18.00	1881
	Total	£11,435.15	

b) insurance renewal

Council insurance was due for renewal on 01.10.23. at a cost of £2,660.40 under the long-term agreement.

Proposed by Cllr. Abbott, seconded by Cllr. Jones that insurance premium of £2,660.40 be paid

Resolved

Clerk

c) allotment rent 2024

Allotment rents were increased to £18 for a half plot and £36 for a full plot in 2020/21. and had remained at that level since. Council currently had one name on the waiting list.

Proposed by Cllr. Abbott, seconded by Cllr. White that rents remain unchanged in 2023/24 given the cost of living crisis

Resolved

Clerk

21. **Date of Next Meeting:** 3rd October 2023