

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

PRESENT: S. Fardon (Chair), J. Abbott, C. Bays, P. Jones, R. Saunders, T. Saunders, J. Walker, C. Worker, R. Worker the Clerk, Mrs. Paice and 4 members of the public

1. Public Open Session:

Resident commented that parking along The Furlong, particularly at the junction, was an ongoing problem which he had raised 16 years ago. He did not object to bollards or yellow lines but suggested that residents should be encouraged to use the parking courts provided and that the green space at the entrance could be converted to parking – see item 12a)

Resident asked about the responses to the Council's letter to residents of The Furlong about parking – see item 12a). He had forwarded 27 photographs of parking on the footway to Council, 10 recent the remainder historical and commented that forcing vehicles to park on the road would not displace the problem. Council had agreed in July 2022 to request bollards and H bars and ask Bedford BC about a Borough wide footway parking ban but nothing had been done. He agreed that some residents were not using the parking courts but they were unlikely to be persuaded to do so. Police had insufficient manpower to enforce no driving on the footway legislation so wooden bollards with reflectors would resolve the problem with minimal impact on the street scene and without impeding refuse or emergency vehicles. He agreed that parking at the junction was a problem and suggested painting no parking on the road and marking parking bays near nos. 1-5.

2. Apologies: P. Olney (illness), P. White (personal)

3. Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. C. Worker for item 10 as resident of Parsonage Close. Cllr. Abbott for item 12a) as a resident of The Furlong.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th November 2023 :

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

5. Clerk's Report:

Highways – Street light outside the Village Hall had been reconnected. Clerk had reported the skip blocking the footway in Ruffs Furze, which had been removed. Cllr. Abbott had been advised that Highways were spending more time reacting to reports of blocked gullies than carrying out cyclical cleansing and were returning more frequently to problematic gullies, such as those in Oakley, than in a cyclical program. They were also sweeping roads on a 12-week weather dependent cycle and only returned in between if they received a report that could not wait until the next visit. Next visit to Oakley was due in January 2024. Borough Trees overhanging property in Ruffs Furze would be reduced.

Speed Cameras - there were 33 notices of intended prosecution in October, 29 for speeds up to 39mph, 2 for speeds between 41mph and 42mph, 1 for speeds between 43mph and 45mph and 1 for a speed of 50mph

Speed Watch – there were nil returns from events 07.11.23. in High Street and 23.11.23. in Lovell Road

Fly tipping – rubbish dumped in Lovell Road & Church Lane was reported to Bedford BC who cleared

Riverside Meadow/Brockwell Meadow – meeting had been arranged on 18.12.23. with the contractor to discuss CPRE hedge planting project on the sites

Orchard – allotment tenants had no objection to a seat in the orchard and former members of the Gardening Club had been informed

Quiz – November quiz had made a profit of £199. Next quiz Friday 08.12.23.

Lincroft Academy – meeting had been arranged 08.12.23. for Chair and Cllr. Walker to meet new head and tour the school

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting 7th November 2023: none Action

7. Speed Watch Presentation: Action

Speed Watch representatives explained that the purpose of the Group was to improve safety and educate drivers. Data was owned by Council and Cllr. R. Worker provided a link between the Group and Council. There were 9 police approved locations although the Group was looking to move the High Street location. Speed Watch events followed police approved procedure and results were sent to the police by the Clerk. One panel recorded time and speed in both approaching and departing directions and one time, speed, vehicle type and gap between vehicles in both approaching and departing directions. Speed profiles were created and displayed in graph form. Exact locations were noted so data could be compared over a period of time. The Hi-Viz effect of the Group reduced speeds by 2 – 3 mph. Group noted that the average speed cameras in Pavenham Road were not always slowing traffic as Group had recorded many vehicles speeding at their location which was only 40m outside the camera zone. Chair thanked the Group for their work and noted that the statistical analysis was very impressive and useful. She confirmed that Council would like a copy Council agreed that a discussion with Speed Watch about future strategy would be useful. Cllr. Abbott suggested a pole in Reynes Drive as it was a busy road and Group noted that sockets in various locations agreed with police would be more helpful as the pole could then be moved between locations. It was initially intended to move the Highfield Road unit but the supplier had advised that this was not feasible. Cllr. Abbott suggested solar panels fixed to poles so the unit could be moved between them.

Clerk

They had subsequently suggested yellow lines and had only recently provided a scheme which Council had rejected at the November meeting. Cllr. Walker noted that in 2022 Government had been considering a national no verge parking scheme but this had not proceeded so Bedford BC had not pursued. As a resident, Cllr. Abbott noted that there was an issue with parking on the footway further along The Furlong.

Proposed by Cllr. Walker that Council agree to bollards on the bend as they would not displace the problem and would resolve that issue, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders

Resolved

Council agreed that there was still a problem at the junction and would discuss yellow lines there at the January meeting.

Clerk

Clerk

b) yellow lines at the Reynes Drive/Station Road and Flax Close/Station Road junctions

Cllr. Abbott had requested a proposal for yellow lines on the Flax Close/Station Road junction and Reynes Drive/Station Road junction. Awaiting a response from Bedford BC and Cllr. Abbott to chase. Council noted that Bedford BC would need to consult on yellow lines before agreeing to mark.

JA

13. Borough Councillor’s Report:

Action

Cllr. Walker reported that over the last three months footfall in the Town Centre had increased by 28%. Various events had been staged and the Christmas lights switch on was well attended. Legal documents had been sent to Network Rail concerning the flooding under the Lovell Road bridge and they had 21 days to respond. In the short term, Bedford BC would be installing a bridge over the footway during the Christmas holiday which might require a road closure. The Local Plan Inspector decided that the Borough Local Plan could not currently be found sound. He had not accepted the Borough’s build out rate calculation, considered the A421 improvements would not be delivered in time and the Elstow site would cause more harm to listed buildings than Bedford BC had stated. The Borough was looking to address these issues. Full Council had rejected the capital budget so the Town Centre, leisure services and the GP estate would not be allocated funding.

Cllr. Abbott added that the 2024/25 budget consultation was ongoing. Applications for postal and proxy votes could not be done online and a post box to heaven had been installed at Bedford Crematorium.

**14. Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:
Decisions notified since Council meeting – 7th November 2023**

Application No. **23/01186/FUL** - single storey front extension at 10 Dewlands
Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Permission 07.11.23.

Application No. **23/01982/FUL & 23/01983/LBC** - demolition of existing timber framed rear conservatory structure at 31 Station Road

Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Refusal 23.11.23. on the grounds that the proposed extension, combined with the loss of historic fabric at ground floor level, would cause a low level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset and would not preserve the building and its features of special architectural or historic interest.

Application No. **23/02309/TPO** - various tree works at Fox Covert, Westfield Road

Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Permission 29.11.23.

Application No. **23/02271/FUL** - single storey front extension at 30 Ruffs Furze

Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Permission 04.12.23.

Application No. **e) 23/02318/FUL** - demolition of one garage and erection of detached dwelling at 76 Dewlands

Parish Objection on the grounds that the proposed new dwelling would constitute back land development; access to the remaining garages would be difficult as one garage in a block of attached garages would need to be demolished; the new dwelling would give a cramped appearance to the area and would have to use the remaining garage forecourts to access the property by vehicle and by foot and the proposed dwelling would be out of keeping with that part of Dewlands where all of the houses are semi-detached properties.

Decision/Date: Refusal 04.12.23. on the grounds that the proposal would fail to be of a high quality in terms of design and layout and would fail to promote local distinctiveness. The back land development would not reflect the character and pattern of the area, would not achieve a positive relationship with the surrounding area nor an active frontage to the street or surrounding public spaces. Owing to siting of the dwelling to the rear of the retained garage block, the scheme would appear cramped and contrived and would fail to integrate well with or complement the character of the area. The proposal would result in an unacceptable sense of enclosure, poor outlook and an oppressive internal living environment. The proposal failed to achieve car parking of a suitable width, adequate pedestrian access to parked cars, access for pedestrians, cycles and bins and suitable refuse and recycling storage and access arrangements. Also, the application was not supported by an ecology report and biodiversity net gain information.

Applications received since Council meeting – 7th November 2023

Application No. a) **23/02494/MAO** - outline application with all matters reserved except access, for residential development of up to 10 dwellings, site access and highway works, associated infrastructure, green infrastructure including sustainable drainage, ecological habitats, amenity green space, demolition of existing outbuildings and ancillary works at land north of High Street

Parish Cllr. Abbott to ask if the application could be called into the Planning Committee on highway grounds and Clerk to request a meeting with Head of Planning to discuss the application.

JA
Clerk

Application No. b) **23/02491/FUL** - black featheredge cladding to eastern elevation of barn at Mallows, The Drive

Parish No objection

Comments

15. Correspondence:

a) Bedford BC - Rural England Prosperity Fund Grants for active travel enhancements

Grants of up to £25K available for active travel enhancements. Grant would be insufficient for a pedestrian bridge across the river in Church Lane but Cllr. Walker suggested it could be used to part fund a footway along Highfield Road. Cllr. Abbott to ascertain whether the Clapham developers would be installing or contributing to a path and whether Council could apply for a grant towards the cost of the path. Council also had CIL monies of £5,317 which had to be spent by June 2024 and had been allocated to a footway on Highfield Road.

Action

JA

b) Bedford BC 2024/25 budget consultation

Bedford BC was consulting on its 2024/25 budget, in particular suggestions for developing the workforce operating model, managing demand better, effective contract management and commercialisation and reviewing service offer. They also requested comments on their new investment plan and how to meet financial challenges. The Borough was facing a budget gap of £11.4m for 2024/25. Council had no comments.

Clerk

65. Finance Matters:

a) accounts for period up to 30th November 2023

Income and balances:

NatWest Bank - Current account balance at 30.11.23. £20,869.62

NatWest Bank – Business Reserve account balance at 30.11.23. £7,351.72

Nationwide - Savings Bond £61,006.43

Hampshire Trust - Savings Bond £85,013.20

Action

Received since last meeting:

Cox	Allotment rent	44.76
Walker A	Allotment rent	44.76
Miles	Allotment rent	44.76
Hull	Allotment rent	44.76
Weston	Allotment rent	22.38
Walker S	Allotment rent	22.38
Signature Sales	Newsletter advertising	130.00
Whites	Newsletter advertising	108.00
Worker	November Quiz	247.00
NatWest	Interest	8.75
	Total	£717.55

Payments Already Made:

Old School	Rent for upper rooms November	153.83	Chq. No. s/o
Salaries	November payment	1482.58	s/o
Pension Fund	November payment	506.74	1900

Payments Made:

Bedford BC	Grass cutting - 2nd quarter Hire of Hall 18.11.23. for defibrillator course and Committee	3151.69	1901
Village Hall	Room 05.12.23.	36.00	1902
	Total	£5,330.8	4

b) Clerks' 2023/24 pay award

National pay award for 2023/24 had been agreed.

Proposed by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. R. Saunders that Clerk's salary be increased to £14,465.36 p.a. (scale point 30) for 14 hours p.w. w.e.f. 01.04.23. in line with National pay award

Resolved

Clerk

c) review of bus shelter cleaner & litter picker performance & wages

Council was content with the performance of the litter picker and bus shelter cleaner and Clerk to thank her for her work. Living wage to increase w.e.f. 01.04.24. to 11.44 per hour equating to £426.14 per month

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Abbott that salary be increased to £426.14 per month w.e.f. 01.04.24.

Resolved

Clerk

Assuming 30 minutes per shelter per month at national living wage, bus shelter cleaning wage would increase to £40.04 per month w.e.f. 01.04.24.
Proposed by Cllr. R. Worker, seconded by Cllr. R. Saunders that wage be increased to £40.04 per month w.e.f. 01.04.24.

Resolved

Clerk

c) annual play area inspections

Current contractor had quoted £270.75 + VAT to carry out the inspections. PlaySafety had quoted £262 + VAT but would need to carry out the inspection in May not September and other companies had not responded. Currently a quarterly inspection was carried out in June at a discounted rate as inspections were carried out the same time as those in Clapham and so a new contract would be needed for these.

Proposed by Cllr. Bays, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders that quotation for £270.75 + VAT be accepted as to change quarterly inspections would increase the overall cost

Resolved

Clerk

e) new projects 2024/25

Replacement bin at Lovell Road/Parrott Close bus stop and defibrillator had been included in the draft budget. New solar Speed Indicator Device would cost around £4,050 and could not be moved once installed. Since the draft budget was issued contractor had advised that new lights would be needed for the Christmas tree at the High Street crossroads next year as 10 strings had failed when installing due to age. Clerk had requested an estimate of the cost of replacement. Council agreed to use monies from the Directory for new lights.

Clerk

17. **Date of Next Meeting:** 2nd January 2024. Finance Advisory Group
9th January 2024