

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 9th January 2024 in the Village Hall

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

1. Public Open Session:

Neighbour was concerned that 23/02666/FUL did not conform to the Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) or Bedford BC Local Plan – see item 14c). Employment opportunities would be temporary, the dwelling would not be affordable and would not increase biodiversity. The dwelling would be back land development, the design and materials were not in keeping with the surrounding brick and tile buildings and the uphill slope of the land would cause the property to impinge on the view across the river valley. In addition, the amount of soil to be removed to create the dwelling and access would affect groundwater levels.

Another neighbour was also concerned about groundwater levels as one storey of the dwelling was in the basement and tabled an ARUP study indicating the effect of basements on groundwater levels. The slope of Pavenham Road was such that changes to the levels could deprive trees the hedge on his property of water. He agreed that the proposal did not conform to the NDP and added that it would set a precedent for development.

Owner of Courtyard Barn, The Drive explained that he had had two planning applications rejected and invited councillors to visit the property to view a new proposal as he did not want to apply again and for Council to object. The house was currently very small and he was not a developer but wanted to enlarge the property to live in. Councillors agreed to make a site visit and Clerk to arrange.

Clerk

2. Apologies: J. Abbott (business)

3. Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. C. Worker for item 9 as resident of Parsonage Close. Cllr. White for item 12a) as a resident of Reynes Drive. Cllr. Olney for item 14b) as a neighbour of the applicant

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th December 2023 :

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

5. Clerk's Report:

Highways – Clerk had asked Highways to clear leaves from footways throughout the village and Cllr. Walker to chase. Clerk had also asked them to investigate the drop into a driveway on Church Lane which was causing the resident's entrance to flood. A verge in Lincroft had been damaged by a resident driving over it.

JW

Clerk had asked Highways to repair and the resident to stop driving on the grass. Skip blocking the footway in Ruffs Furze had been reported to Bedford BC and removed. Resident was concerned about drains overflowing in High Street on 09.12.23. although the Borough had cleared them a few days earlier. Cllr. Abbott had advised the resident that the current drainage system is unable to cope with the heavy rainfalls we are now experiencing. This was a Borough wide problem which would require significant investment to bring the drainage system up to a standard to handle the rainfall. Council would work to ensure that the Borough kept up its maintenance programme for gullies and regular road sweeping to stop the gullies becoming clogged with rubbish.

Speed Cameras - there was no data yet for November and December

Speed Watch – 5 vehicles were recorded speeding in the Highfield Road 40mph zone 30.11.23. and there was a nil return for the event in Reynes Drive 11.12.23.

Reported to police

Fly tipping – rubbish dumped in Lovell Road reported to Bedford BC who cleared

Trees - A tree collapsed on the Green 21.12.23. breaking a second tree as it fell. Tree surgeon had felled what remained of the trees 22.12.23. at a cost of £580.00. A branch had also fallen from a tree on the Green 02.01.24. Tree surgeon had removed at a cost of £120.00 and advised that to reduce the rest of the ash tree would cost £230.00 Clerk confirmed that sufficient monies remained in the budget and Council ratified the payments. Branch hanging from a tree in Ruffs Furze/Dewlands alleyway had been reported to Bedford BC who had removed.

Fence between Brockwell and the Kindergarten - Bedford BC had asked for Council's comment on the work. Council was very pleased with the work and Clerk to advise Bedford BC.

Defibrillator - DHSC – advising that eligible organisation's applications will be confirmed once they have completed their match funding and provided this payment to the AED providers, London Hearts. Passed to Bedford BC for Ward Funding. Cllr. White noted that the case on the Village Hall defibrillator was deteriorating and would contact Community Heartbeat Trust about the cost of a replacement.

Quiz – December quiz had made a profit of £174 and Christmas raffle £177. Next quiz Friday 19.01.24.

Lincroft Academy – meeting on 08.12.23. for Chair and Cllr. Walker to meet new head and tour the school had been postponed and awaiting confirmation of new date.

Clerk

PW

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting 5th December 2023: none | Action

Council had been shortlisted and further information had been requested. Clerk had provided.

11. New Gates on Play Area at the Green:

Council had agreed in May to consider replacing the gates on the play area at the Green with hydraulic gates if monies remained in the budget. Existing gates had a spring mechanism that made it impossible to ensure they closed in the correct time and stay closed. Contractor had quoted £1,900.00 + VAT to remove and dispose of each old gate and supply and fit new gate and had advised that gates were 1m high so would be taller than the surrounding fence. Clerk noted that £4,880 remained in the play equipment budget so Council could afford the gates.

Proposed by Cllr. Walker, seconded by Cllr. Jones that new gates be installed at a cost of £3,800 + VAT

Resolved

Action

Clerk

12. Highway Matters:

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

Bedford BC had forwarded a plan of yellow lines at Flax Close and advised that as road is privately owned yellow lines could only be marked to the back of the public highway (i.e. to the line of the wall of no. 86 Station Road), approximately 4.5 metres. This would help to keep the junction clear but would not prevent parental parking further in Flax Close. Council noted that residents closed the gates to prevent parking further along the road and yellow lines would improve safety for students as they would improve visibility at the junction.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Walker that Council support yellow lines at Flax Close/Station Road junction

Resolved

Council was still awaiting a plan for Reynes Drive.

Councillors noted that there were potholes by the Oakley Road roundabout to Clapham and the junction of Reynes Drive/Station Road and the road was breaking up at Station Road/High Street junction. Clerk to ask Highways to repair.

Twin bridges were also blocked with debris and Clerk to ask Bedford BC and Environment Agency to clear.

Action

Clerk

Clerk

Clerk

b) yellow lines at The Furlong/Pavenham Road junction

Council had agreed at December meeting to discuss yellow lines at The Furlong/Pavenham Road junction because vehicles parked around the bend. Councillors agreed that they wanted to preserve the village environment and did not want yellow lines around all junctions. They had agreed to those in Station Road for the safety of students.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Jones that Council would not support yellow lines at The Furlong/Pavenham Road junction at present

Resolved

Clerk

13. Borough Councillor’s Report:

Action

Cllr. Walker reported that the Fusion contract ended 31.01.24. and Greenwich Leisure were the new contractors. Membership would carry forward but monies in accounts needed to be used by 31.01.24. and any direct debits or standing orders cancelled. The walkway under Lovell Road bridge had been delayed. A road closure for 4 days would be needed so the work would now be carried out at Half Term. Debenhams had been bought by the Borough Council to regenerate the area and the library would be moving to the ground floor. Christmas events had been very successful and footfall had increased. Numbers using free parking had also increased as had bus usage so free parking was not impacting on the bus service. An extraordinary Full Council Meeting had been held 18.12.23. and capital projects, such as funding for GP surgeries, were put back into the budget. Universal had bought the land at Stewartby for their new site. Mr. Fuller MP would be holding a surgery at the Old School on 11.01.24. He would meet Council at 5.15pm and then members of the public at 6.00pm. Cllr. Abbott had forwarded a report noting that funding for road and pavement renewal and ensuring leisure facilities were refurbished had been included in the capital budget and a new leisure centre removed because of the cost. He added that Borough officers worked extremely hard during the recent flooding to ensure roads were suitably closed and information was shared via social media. Unfortunately, none of the automatic flood signs were working, which would be pursued in the post flooding debrief.

14. Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:

Decisions notified since Council meeting – 5th December 2023

Application No. **23/02317/FUL** - first floor side extension and side extension to existing loft at 41 Church Lane
 Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Refusal 13.12.23. on the grounds that the proposed extension would harm the visual amenity of the street scene and character of the area. It would further enclose the open character at the junction of Church Lane/Ruffs Furze, owing to the increased height and width at first floor level. Also, owing to the height and width it would not appear as a secondary addition to the host dwelling.

Application No. **23/02360/FUL** for a one and two storey rear extension at Iona, 41 High Street
 Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Permission 19.12.23.

Application No. 23/02491/FUL - black featheredge cladding to eastern elevation of barn at Mallows, The Drive
 Parish No objection
 Comments:
 Decision/Date: Permission 05.01.24.

Applications received since Council meeting – 5th December 2023

Application No. a) 23/02520/FUL - single storey side and rear extensions and widening of driveway at 25 High Street
 Parish No objection
 Comments

Application No. b) 23/02730/FUL & 23/02731/LBC - demolition of existing rear lean to single storey extension and erection of single storey rear extension. Internal modification works to the ground and first floor at 29 Station Road
 Parish No objection
 Comments

Application No. c) 23/02666/FUL - erection of one dwelling at land at rear of The Robins, 15 Pavenham Road
 Parish Objection on the grounds that
 Comments 1. the proposed new dwelling is not needed as sufficient housing has been provided through the Neighbourhood Plan
 2. the proposed dwelling would constitute back land development and building in the open countryside 3. The proposed dwelling would also set a precedent for further development off Pavenham Road which would impinge on a locally important view in the NDP to the west along the river valley.

15. Planning Policy:

a) Meeting with Bedford BC to discuss application 23/02494/MAO - residential development of up to 10 dwellings off High Street

Councillors and NDP Group members met Chief Planning Officer 04.01.24. as they were concerned that the NDP was not being given sufficient weight. Chief Planning Officer noted that “about 30” houses at Station Road could not be determined until the reserved matters application was submitted. He confirmed that the design statements for both the Station Road and High Street sites would be considered at the reserved matters stage. Only access to the High Street site could be considered at the outline application stage and although Highways had initially objected, following speed surveys carried out by the agents, they were now content if certain conditions were met.

Decisions on design of the site, housing mix, S106 and CIL agreements, ownership of open space and SuDS would be decided at the reserved matters stage at which time Council could object and could also call the application in to the Planning Committee. Chief Planning Officer confirmed that he would meet with Council/NDP Group again for both Station Road and High Street sites once reserved matters applications were submitted. Council would also write to agents requesting meetings. He noted that numbers on the High Street site would not necessarily be reduced if 40 houses were agreed for Station Road. The Local Plan 2040 Planning Inspector had concerns about delivery of Highway projects and how quickly housing could be built at Little Barford and Kempston Hardwick. Chief Planning Officer advised that several hundred new houses would need to be found but these would need to conform to allocations in the Local Plan 2040 and so the Borough would not be looking for additional housing in Oakley. He advised waiting until the 2040 Local Plan was agreed before reviewing the NDP again. Clerk had thanked Chief Planning Officer and would forward a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

Clerk

b) Bedford BC Supplementary Planning Document on Trees & Development

Clerk noted that the document covered trees on adjacent land, future growth of trees and roots and shading. Also, tree protection measures to be taken during development, layout plans & aftercare conditions to ensure new trees reach maturity. Appropriate species to be used for trees and hedgerows & community orchards to be considered. Trees to be used as part of sustainable drainage plans but impact on existing infrastructure to be taken into account. Council had no comments.

16. Correspondence:

CPRE – planning workshop 03.02.24.

Workshop was aimed at councillors new to planning. Councillors were unavailable.

Action

17. Finance Matters:

a) accounts for period up to 31st December 2023

Income and balances:

NatWest Bank - Current account balance at 31.12.23.	£16,203.63
NatWest Bank – Business Reserve account balance at 31.12.23.	£7,360.19
Nationwide - Savings Bond	£61,006.43
Hampshire Trust - Savings Bond	£85,013.20

Received since last meeting:

Worker	December Quiz	398.90
NatWest	Interest	8.47
	Total	£407.37

Action

Payments Already Made:			Chq. No.
Old School	Rent for upper rooms December	153.83	s/o
Salaries	December payment	1482.58	s/o
Pension Fund	December payment	683.10	1903
Anglian Water	Allotment water	50.23	d/d
Payments Made:			
Christmas Decorators	2023 Christmas lights	3384.00	1904
White Hart Press	Printing Winter Newsletter	785.00	1905
SLCC	Membership renewal	183.00	1906
Oakley Properties	Rent for land at Oakley bridges	100.00	1907
	Hire of Hall for quiz 17.11.23. & 08.12.23. Hire of Committee		
Village Hall	Room 02.01.24. and 09.01.24.	126.00	1908
		Total	£6,947.74

b) new Christmas lights for crossroad tree

Contractor had advised that 10 strings had failed on the crossroads tree when the lights were installed. He had suggested £4,000 be included in the budget to cover all options and would provide quotations for the March meeting. Finance Group had included £2,300 in the 2024/25 budget for new lights – see item 17c).

Councillors noted that some residents did not like the blue lights and Cllr. White commented that there were no lights at the Lovell Road entrance to the village. He added that Cople had lights on streetlamps and Clerk to enquire about the contractor and cost. Council to consider options at March meeting.

Clerk

c) budget & precept 2024/25

Clerk had circulated a draft budget. Expenditure in 2023/24 was likely to be as budgeted except that the solicitors' fees for the Kindergarten lease were £473 higher than originally estimated and CIL expenditure was £4,200 more than budgeted as less CIL monies than expected were spent on play equipment in 2022/23. This was more than offset by less than budgeted spent on tree works, the allotments and bus shelter maintenance.

Income was expected to be as budgeted except that investment interest would be higher due to a rise in rates in 2023, Bedford BC had increased their contribution to the cost of grass cutting by £512 and monies from the quizzes had not been included. This was partially offset by an expected reduction in Directory advertising receipts.

The Finance Group recommended two new items of expenditure be included:- a replacement bin at Lovell Road/Parrott Close bus stop (approximately £700) and new Christmas lights (£2,300) as a new defibrillator had been funded from Cllr. Abbott's 2023/24 Ward Fund. New SID would cost around £4,050 and would not be portable so the Group had not recommended.

Improvements to Brockwell Meadow would continue to be funded from Directory income. Group therefore recommended a 2.36% increase in the precept to £58,200 which would increase the band D rate by 1.9% from £57.68 to £58.77.

Contractor had subsequently recommended including £4,000 in the budget for the Christmas lights to cover all options.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders that budget for Christmas lights be increased to £4,000

Resolved

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. White that the amended budget be adopted and a precept of £58,200 be set for 2024/25

Resolved

Chair & Clerk signed the precept request

Clerk

Clerk

d) Clerk's expenses

Proposed by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. Walker that expenses of £23.09 for the period October to December 2023 be paid

Resolved

18. Date of Next Meeting: 5th March 2024