

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5th March 2024 in the Village Hall

PRESENT: S. Fardon (Chair), J. Abbott, C. Bays, P. Jones, P. Olney, R. Saunders, T. Saunders, J. Walker, P. White, C. Worker, R. Worker the Clerk, Mrs. Paice, two representatives from Speed Watch and 2 members of the public

1. Public Open Session:

Resident who ran her own art business asked for permission to hold events in the open spaces in Oakley and whether Council would be interested in sponsoring an event. Resident was DBS checked and had her own public liability insurance and risk assessments. Events could be nature related or outdoor activity games could be hired. Council had no objection to resident using Council owned spaces provided she informed Council beforehand of the dates but it would be for her to organise and insure events. Chair suggested she also contact the ORA about using the playing field and the Youth Club about borrowing equipment.

Resident was concerned about parking at the entrance to The Furlong. Chair advised that Council had agreed to the installation of bollards further into The Furlong but had decided against yellow lines at the entrance as the effectiveness of the bollards was not yet known. Council did not want to put in yellow lines except where there was a safety issue and under Parish Council regulations the decision could not be changed for 6 months unless there was a change in circumstances. Resident suggested using some of the green space for parking and Council noted that open space was part of the planning requirements for the site and planning consent might be needed to change its use. Clerk noted that police had visited 01.03.24. and would return. Resident commented that early evening was the worst time and Clerk to ask police to blitz the area in the evenings. Chair would continue to highlight inconsiderate and dangerous parking in the Newsletter.

Clerk
Chair

2. Apologies: none

3. Declarations of Interest:

Cllr. R. Worker for item 10 as Speed Watch member. Cllr. Walker for item 12 as a relative of an allotment tenant. Cllrs. Bays & White for item 15a) as a resident of Reynes Drive. Cllr. R. Saunders for item 17c) as an affected landowner. Cllrs. C. and R. Worker for item 20a) as organisers of the quizzes.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th January 2024 :

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

5. Clerk's Report:

Highways – leaning lamp post at Station Road/Reynes Drive junction had been reported to Bedford BC and Clerk had chased repainting of white lines and asked for signposts to be cleaned. Clerk had also asked for the timer on the streetlight in the High Street that was not going off at midnight be adjusted but Bedford BC had advised it was deliberately left on as there were few lights in this area. Leaves had been cleared from footways and Clerk had requested that debris under the river bridges be removed. Bedford BC had advised that potholes at High Street/Reynes Drive junction and deteriorating surface at High Street/Station Road would be repaired. The soakaway gully on the path from Grenidge Way to Dewlands would be dug and cleared as it was still flooding and residents were damaging the adjacent lawn to avoid the water. Bedford BC had consulted on the proposed introduction of double yellow lines in Flax Close and Station Road which included Reynes Drive and the Traffic Regulation Order came into effect 04.03.24. There would be a temporary overnight closure of Lovell Road for bridge inspection on 23.03.24. and a temporary closure of Station Road 24.03.24. for the Oakley 20 Race. Vehicles parking on the High Street footway had been reported to police.

Speed Cameras - there were 6 notices of intended prosecution issued in November, all for speeds up to 39mph and 4 in December all for speeds up to 40mph

Speed Watch – 3 vehicles were speeding in Highfield Road 40mph zone at event on 17.01.24, nil return for Highfield Road 29.01.24. and for Lovell Road on 26.02.24. Reported to police.

Fly tipping – rubbish dumped at Reynes drive/Burleigh Place junction, Lovell Road/Parrott Close bus stop and at the twin bridges reported to Bedford BC who cleared. Clerk had also asked Bedford BC to litter pick the slip road adjacent to Judges Spinney.

Litter bins - bin at Reynes Drive/Station Road had not been emptied on several occasions and some red dog bins were also not emptied w/c 19.02.24. Reported to Bedford BC. Replacement litter bins had been installed at the High Street and Lovell Road bus stops. Bedford BC would survey the Lovell Road footpath by the bridge but were reluctant to install new dog bins due to their financial position.

Defibrillator – contribution towards a new defibrillator had been sent to London Hearts, who were managing the DHSC scheme. Cllr. White had reported the poor state of the Village Hall cabinet and was awaiting a response.

Orchard - Bedfordshire & Luton Orchards Group (BLOG) had suggested Council log the community orchard onto the national database and join BLOG. Clerk had done so.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting 9th January 2024: noneAction

7. Reports:-Action**a) ORA meeting 16.01.24.**

Cllrs. T. Saunders & R. Worker attended and reported that the current OSSC Steward had submitted their resignation effective from 17.01.24. and a temporary Steward had been appointed. Lincroft School had approached the ORA regarding a “Disaster Recovery Strategy” and a formal proposal would be submitted in due course. As joint lease holders for the playing field Council agreement would be needed. Discussions had been held with Lincroft School about using their car parking for the 2024 Firework Night event and ORA/OSSC were hopeful that an agreement could be reached. It was planned to hold another Summer Steam Rally Event later this year.

Due to waterlogged pitches and frozen ground many AFC Oakley matches had been cancelled. The intention to create a “Wildcats” team was under review but female training sessions would enable girls to progress their interest with other clubs if one was not formed by AFC Oakley. Junior U13 and U16 sides had reached their respective cup semi-finals and the annual Roly Moore Football Tournament would be held towards the end of the season.

Membership of the Motorcycle Club had risen to an all-time high of 511. The annual “Easter Egg Ride Out” would take place on Easter Sunday and an “American Theme Night”, including drag racing cars, was planned for July.

Cllr. Worker reported that the Council had approved their budget for 2024/25, which included rent for the Playing Field. He asked about the status of the ORA/OSSC accounts which are required to be made available to Council. ORA advised that these were still being completed and had to be signed off by the ORA/OSSC Trustees and Committee before being presented. They could not give a timescale for completion but acknowledged that the process was taking far longer than it should and that they would make every effort to progress as quickly as possible. Clerk noted that 2022/23 accounts had still not been received and Cllr. Worker to raise at the next meeting on 19.03.24.

b) Network Meeting 08.02.24.Action

Cllr. Jones reported that the meeting began with a short welcome from The Mayor, who advised the budget had been passed at Full Council the previous day; the Borough had purchased the old Debenhams site; recently footfall in the Town Centre was higher; the Borough was introducing more free parking at the multi-story car parks and looking into park and ride and the Mayor had also had a meeting with the CEO of East West Rail.

There were questions about flooding at various bridges in the Borough and the problems caused by the resulting road closures and about the time limits to spend s106 and CIL monies. An early indication of how much money would be received was requested so the money could be used before the time limit expired. Bedford BC advised that parishes were unlikely to lose the money, as there was little record of any being returned to the Borough through exceeding the time limit.

Mayor had met with East West Rail, who had advised that they would be holding the final consultation this year in two parts, the first of which would be in June. The Borough had several more route options to put forward, some from their own studies and some from BFARE and other sources. They were further examining the suggestion that using the old route south of the town would cause Bedford to flood if the Great Ouse flooded and were considering flooding around Bedford itself. More information was at <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/strategies-and-major-projects/east-west-rail-connection> The 2040 Local Plan had been rejected by the Planning Inspector partly due to issues with National Highways' projects, so further work was now needed to reach agreement with National Highways. Future Network Meetings would be held in May/June and September/October.

8. East West Rail (EWR):

a) **Local Representatives' Meeting 31.01.24.**

EWR were continuing to develop proposals and consider feedback and work towards the statutory consultation, which was expected in the first half of 2024. The meeting discussed door to door connectivity and representatives were concerned that EWR maps were not detailed enough to show connectivity from rural villages and asked how additional infrastructure such as buses, cycleways, secure cycle storage etc. would be funded both now and in the future. EWR advised that they were collaborating with local authorities on proposals for the statutory consultation and ways to achieve funding and were discussing with local bus companies. They were considering e-bikes/e-scooters, cycling and EV vehicle parking and charging and other stations such as Kempston Hardwick as well as Bedford Midland and commented that further information would be available in the statutory consultation. The statutory consultation would be based on existing geotechnical surveys. Representatives were concerned about funding and that documents on the website were updated without any acknowledgement that they had been changed or any trail of changes. EWR confirmed that they had not yet had discussions with Universal about their project. Cllr. Walker noted that EWR would hold a public meeting in Clapham during the statutory consultation

b) **Bedford BC reports on EWR**

Bedford BC had commissioned reports on flooding, economic impact, criteria analysis and four tracks v six tracks. Reports had concluded that the EWR flooding case was not proven on current evidence and economically the southern routes were almost as good as the northern. The analysis showed that four tracks was still a viable option but did not show any alternative route to be clearly superior to EWR's proposal as all routes had pros and cons therefore decision-makers would need to weigh them appropriately. A briefing had been given on 06.02.24. see

https://bedford.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/853510

Action

Proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. R. Saunders that permission be refused because of safety and insurance concerns
Resolved

Clerk

13. Christmas Lights:-

Action

Contractor had quoted for two options for replacement lights at the crossroads. One for £2,073.00 + VAT for 32 sets of string lights in white, warm white, blue, green, red or pink. Lights could be static or with a 20% flash. The second for £3,911.00 + VAT for 32 sets of colour changing string lights in blue, green, cyan, red, purple and cool white light. Lights could be set up to for fixed colour, colours jumping between the range, colours fading between the range, twinkling function or multi coloured. Lights could be set to change colour daily or weekly. For streetlamps in Lovell Road, an alternative contractor had quoted £205.00 + VAT per column to supply 6m of rope light, (colour to be agreed) install double pole isolator inside the column and weatherproof power supply outlet at the top of the column, including putting up and taking down of lights each side of Christmas for the first year. To supply a motif rather than rope lights would cost £345.00 + VAT per column including putting up and taking down of lights for the first year. To put up and take down lights in subsequent years would cost £50.00 + VAT per column

Proposed by Cllr. White, seconded by Cllr. Jones that quotations for £2073.00 + VAT for different coloured strings be accepted

Resolved

Clerk

Proposed by Cllr. White, seconded by Cllr. Jones that quotation for £345.00 + VAT be accepted for 5 motifs on lamp posts in Lovell Road provided Highways had no objections

Resolved

Clerk

14. 2024 Directory:-

Action

Cllr. C. Worker thanked Cllrs. Bays, Jones & R. Worker and the Clerk for their help with the Directory. She noted that advertising revenue had reduced as several businesses had closed or moved. She advised that she would be unable to continue with the Directory next year and Oakley IT would no longer be able to layout the magazine as they were winding down their business. Cllr. Worker to put an article in the June Newsletter asking for volunteers for 2025. Council thanked Cllr. Worker for the 2024 edition.

CW

15. Highway Matters:

Action

a) traffic at Lovell Road bridge

Cllr. Jones was concerned about traffic coming from the bypass onto Lovell Road ignoring the right of way for vehicles leaving Oakley. Council agreed that traffic lights would not help as they would encourage motorists to use Oakley as a rat run and there were no other obvious solutions.

b) planting of flowers at Westfield Road and Lovell Road/Church Lane junctions

Resident was concerned that villagers no longer took pride in Oakley and suggested flowers at T-junction of Westfield Road and the triangle at the junction of Church Lane and Lovell Road to improve the appearance of the areas. Clerk noted that maintenance of flowers at the village entrance signs had been a problem. Council agreed that more bulbs were the best option and Clerk to collect free bulbs from Bedford BC when available.

Clerk

Cllr. Olney reported that the footway in Station Road was breaking up from the crossroads on the western side and Clerk to ask Bedford BC to repair.

Clerk

16. Borough Councillor’s Report:

Action

Cllr. Walker reported that Council Tax increase of 2.99% plus 2% for adult social care had been agreed by Bedford BC. Green waste collections were restarting in Oakley w/c 11.03.24. and 4 hours free parking trial in AllHallows had been extended to the end of March. Parking numbers had increased in AllHallows and had not reduced in other car parks so additional free parking had not affected other sites. Bus passenger numbers had also increased. A new mini golf course would be opening in Russell Park and Bedford Philharmonia Orchestra was holding a pop-up concert in St. Paul’s Church on 09.03.24.

Cllr. Abbott added that work had begun on refurbishing tennis courts, funded by Government and the LTA and grants were available for energy-saving home improvements from 02.04.24. The Mayor had had an unsatisfactory meeting with EWR. Grant Palmer had taken over the Stagecoach service to the Park & Ride and former Mayor Hodgson and Cllr. Rigby had been made Aldermen at a service on 11.02.24.

Cllr. R. Saunders noted that sewage overflows were causing problems in Riverside Meadow, at College Farm and at Oakley House. The pumping station was inadequate and new houses in the village would exacerbate the problem.

Cllr. C. Worker commented that fitting a pump in the manhole at the Old School had only moved the problem further along the system. Cllr. Walker noted that the Mayor would be meeting Anglian Water and she would ask him to raise. Clerk to compile a report on the issues.

Clerk

17. Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:

Decisions notified since Council meeting – 9th January 2024

Application No. 23/02520/FUL - single storey side and rear extensions and widening of driveway at 25 High Street
 Parish No objection
 Comments:
 Decision/Date: Permission 18.01.24.

Application No. **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:

Decision/Date: Permission 12.02.24.

Application No. **24/00111/FUL** - removal of existing conservatory and erection of single storey rear extension at Rivendell, Westfield Road

Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date: Permission 27.02.24.

Applications received since Council meeting – 9th January 2024

Application No. **a) 23/02645/FUL & 23/02646/LBC** - demolition of existing concrete panel garage and erection of new green oak frame barn and widening of front path/driveway wall. Installation of roof light to rear extension, removal of non-original stone & window in dining room and reinstatement of crittal style door at 27 Station Road

Parish No objection

Comments

Application No. **b) 24/00111/FUL** - removal of existing conservatory and erection of single storey rear extension at Rivendell, Westfield Road

Parish No objection

Comments

Application No. **c) 21/00332/EIA** – amended design code for up to 500 dwellings off Milton Road, Clapham

Parish No additional comments

Comments

Application No. **d) 24/00206/FUL** - first floor side extension and side extension to existing loft at 41 Church Lane

Parish No objection

Comments

Application No.	e) 24/00245/FUL - for demolition of one garage and erection of a detached dwelling (revised scheme) at 76 Dewlands
Parish	Objection on the grounds that:
Comments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed new dwelling would constitute backland development. 2. Access to the remaining garages would be difficult as one garage in a block of attached garages would need to be demolished. 3. Although the applicant has stated that the garage they want to demolish is "disused", that is only because the owners of no. 76 have chosen not to use it, so removing it would take away a parking space. Parking is already very difficult in that part of the street because of the high concentration of family houses. 4. 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. 5. The proposed dwelling is also out of keeping with that part of Dewlands where all of the houses are semi detached properties, facing directly onto the road.

f) Site visit to Courtyard Barn, The Drive 20.01.24.

Cllr. Walker reported that several councillors had attended and were content with the area that the homeowner had pegged out for an extension. Homeowner had subsequently forwarded proposed plans for the site but councillors were concerned whether these were the same as the pegged out area.

18. Planning Policy:

Lincroft Academy pre-planning consultation 29.01.24.

Chair reported that plans for the new building, which included on site parking for staff and visitors were displayed for residents to view. The new building would be similar to the Sports Hall and Lincroft hoped to continue with the new building once the current works were completed. Council would consider again once the planning application was submitted. Cllr. Walker noted that many of the additional students would come from Clapham and as they walked to school, they would not increase traffic and parking. She added that the developers of the Milton Road site had now allocated monies for a footway along Highfield Road but this would only cover a quarter of the estimated cost. Council therefore agreed to continue to object to the planning application for the new housing.

ORA	Directory	70.00
Churches Together	Directory	85.00
Methodist Hire	Directory	15.00
Lovell Homes	Directory	35.00
Bedford Arms	Directory	70.00
Oakley Angels	Directory	40.00
Woodworth	Directory	40.00
Worker	February quiz	226.50
Hazel Kaye	Directory	70.00
Forestry Fuels	Directory	30.00
Bedford BC	Ward Fund for defibrillator	750.00
Youth Club	Directory	35.00
Metro signs	Directory	70.00
Lincroft Academy	Directory	35.00
NatWest	Interest	8.49
	Total	£2114.14

**Payments Already
Made:**

**Chq.
No.**

	Rent for upper rooms January & February	307.66	s/o
Old School	Salaries	2997.92	s/o
Paice	Expenses October - December	23.09	1909
Pension Fund	January payment	526.33	1910
Bedford BC	Quarterly grass cutting payment	2714.89	1911
JDT Contracts	Tree works	930.00	1912
DM Payroll	Payroll services - second payment	126.00	1913
BATPC	Planning training	70.00	1914
Pension Fund	February payment	526.33	1915
London Hearts	Contribution to new defibrillator	750.00	1916

Payments Made:

White Hart Press	Printing Directory & quiz sheets	1145.00	1917
	Hire of Hall for quiz 19.01.24. & 16.02.24. Hire of Committee		
Village Hall	Room 05.03.24.	134.50	1918
Youth Club	Donation from quiz proceeds	251.49	1919
Scout Group	Donation from quiz proceeds	251.49	1920
Oakley Brownies	Donation from quiz proceeds	251.49	1921
AFC Oakley	Donation from quiz proceeds	251.49	1922
Messy Church Parish	Donation from quiz proceeds	125.74	1923
Messy Church			
Methodist	Donation from quiz proceeds	125.74	1924
	Total	£11,509.16	

Clerk noted that Bedford BC had yet to provide an explanation for the election postage costs and the invoice for £3,026.89 was still outstanding. Clerk to write again to Bedford BC and Cllr. Walker to pursue.

Clerk advised that Council had £5,468.64 remaining in the current account and March invoices and salaries were still to pay therefore

Proposed by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. Olney that Council transfer £5,000 to the current account

Resolved

Clerk/
JW

Clerk

21. Date of Next Meeting: 2nd April 2024 - Annual Parish Meeting