

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13th May 2024 in the Methodist Church Hall

PRESENT:

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

1. Election of Chair:

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Jones that Cllr. Fardon be elected as Chair.

Resolved

Council thanked Cllr. Fardon for her excellent work as Chair during 2023/24. Cllr. Fardon signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Chair

2. Election of Vice Chair:

Proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Walker that Cllr. R Saunders be elected as Vice-Chair

Resolved

Council thanked Cllr. R. Saunders for his work as Vice-Chair in 2023/24. Cllr. R Saunders signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Vice-Chair.

3. Public Open Session:

Applicant for 24/00915/FUL - single storey side extension plus retention of rooflights, decking, 2 sheds and polytunnel at Courtyard Barn, The Drive advised that the proposal was for a small extension to enable him and his wife to live in the premises and he was seeking Council support. The proposed extension was unobtrusive, would have minimal effect on the existing building and a very small negative heritage impact. He was concerned and disappointed that, after councillors had made a site visit, concern had been raised that the area pegged out did not match the drawings. He assured Council that they were identical and had re-pegged the area if councillors wanted to check. See item 19f)

Applicant for 23/02666/FUL - erection of one dwelling at land at rear of The Robins, 15 Pavenham Road asked why Council had objected to the proposal. They had been informed that the Planning Officer was minded to grant the application as he considered it complied with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. They commented that there was no overlooking and ample space for gardens for both the existing and new house. Council noted that the application had been carefully considered at the January meeting. They viewed Oakley as a whole and the requirement for new housing in the village was met by sites in the Neighbourhood Plan. Council had always objected to back land development and to support this application they would have to change their policy. Chair confirmed that Council would continue to object. Cllr. Abbott noted that the application would therefore be decided by the Planning Committee and both applicant and objectors could speak at the meeting.

4. **Apologies:** P. White (personal), C. Worker (personal), R. Worker (personal)

5. **Declarations of Interest:** none

6. **Appointment of Advisory Group Members and Council Representatives on other bodies:**

Action

Finance Advisory Group: Chair, J Abbott, J Walker, R Worker

Planning Advisory Group: C Bays, P Jones, P Olney, R Saunders, J Walker

NDP Group: P Olney, J Walker, R Worker

Allotment Group: P Olney. Former Cllr. Nicholas would continue as allotment manager

Speed Watch Group: R Worker. Former Cllr. Phillips would continue as co-ordinator

Village Roads Co-ordinator: P White, J Abbott

Footpaths & Waste Bins: P Jones

Oakley Directory: Council to ask Cllr. R. Worker if he was interested in taking on the role

Oakley Recreational Association: P Jones, T Saunders, R Worker

Village Hall: P White

Oakley Carnival Committee: C Bays, C Worker

Oakley Rural Day Care Centre: P Olney

Education Charity Trust: J Walker (Reserve R Worker)

The Villager Community Minibus: C Worker

Tree Warden: R Saunders

Youth Club: S Fardon.

Resolved to appoint

Chair noted that Youth Club was up and running once again

7. **Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 2nd April and the Council Meeting held on 2nd April 2024:**

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

8. **Clerk's Report:**

Highways – overhanging bushes in Station Road/Lincroft alleyway & Station Road roundabout, verges damaged by vehicles in Ruffs Furze and on the corner of Westfield Road, trees blocking river bridges, broken bollards at Station Road roundabout and the pothole outside no. 4 Station Road had been reported to Bedford BC. Concern had been raised that yellow lines in Station Road at the junction with Reynes Drive were too short. Lines were 14m from the centre of the road as shown on the plan but Cllr. Abbott was pursuing with Highways. Verge in Dewlands damaged by the dustcart had been repaired but was damaged again by dustcarts the next week. Clerk had asked Bedford BC to speak to the crews again. White lines still not been re-painted in Church Lane and Clerk had chased Highways. Bramble bush in Station Road was overhanging the footway and Clerk to ask Lincroft School to cut back.

Clerk

Parking – photographs of inconsiderate parking in The Furlong, High Street and Reynes Drive had been forwarded to police

Speed Watch – 2 vehicles were speeding at the event 21.03.24. in Pavenham Road, none in the High Street on 24.04.24 nor in Reynes Drive on 02.05.24. Reported to police.

Grass cutting – cutting had begun w/c 25.03.24. and areas had been missed in Burleigh Place, Copthorne Close, The Furlong, Lovell Road, Parsonage Close, Ruffs Furze and Dewlands and the churchyard was very uneven. Contractor had returned but residents were concerned that the standard of work was poor. Clerk had pursued with contractors, who advised that mower blades had been lowered so cuts should now be neater. Clerk to request a reduction in the first quarter invoice.

Litter bins - bin at Reynes Drive/Station Road had not been emptied twice in April and mess was left around the Post Office bin. Reported to Bedford BC.

Memorial seat – seat had been installed in Riverside Meadow

Quiz - profit for March quiz was £190.00 and April £219.32

Clerk

9. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 2nd April and the Council Meeting held on 2nd April 2024 : none

Action

10. Reports – ORA meeting 19.03.24:

Cllrs. Jones & R. Worker attended and reported that representatives from organisations who used the facilities (poker, darts, pétanque and pool clubs) would be invited onto the Committee. ORA/OSSC AGM would be held on 26.03.24. and as non-members of OSSC councillors had not been invited. 2022/23 accounts would be presented to the AGM and then forwarded to the Parish Council – subsequently received. Steam Rally was scheduled for 13.07.24. and Firework Display for 02.11.24. Events held over Easter weekend to include live music. Due to adverse weather, football matches had been cancelled and the season would extend into May. Football Club thanked Council and the quizzers for their donation and advised that the money would be used across all junior age groups. Motorcycle Club would be holding “dealer nights” as part of their weekly Thursday evening meetings and an American Theme Night on 11.07.24. Classic Car meets were scheduled for 09.04.24, 14.05.24, 11.06.24, 09.07.24, 13.08.24. and 10.09.24. Councillors advised that the Annual Parish Meeting would be held 02.04.24. and encouraged ORA/OSSC members to attend. Cllr. Worker suggested information about the organisations who had just joined the Committee be included in the next Newsletter and ORA Chair would raise at the OSSC Committee meeting.

11. East West Rail (EWR):**a) Local Representatives' Meeting 23.05.24.**

Meeting scheduled for 11.04.24. had been postponed to 23.05.24. and would discuss the Environmental Impact Assessment. In the meantime, Land Interest Questionnaires had been issued to identify landowners with an interest in and/or rights over land and property that may potentially be affected by EWR. Cllr. Walker noted that stage one of the statutory consultation would be held in June but stage two not until 2025.

b) Statutory Consultation information event 07.05.24.

No-one had been available to attend.

Action**12. Police Report:**

There were four reported crimes in February, 2 burglaries, an assault without injury and possession of a blade, six in March, 3 assaults without injury and 1 with injury in Brockwell, a malicious communications offence and a public fear offence and 3 in April, 2 criminal damage offences and 1 assault without injury. Cllr. T. Saunders noted that there had recently been a break-in at Westfield Farm and vehicles had been stolen. Vehicles had also been stolen in other villages. Chair commented that there were police signs at the top of Lincroft concerning anti-social behaviour and councillors noted that these might be related to parking issues.

Action**13. Christmas Decorations on Lovell Road Lamp Posts:**

Bedford BChad advised that they require copies of contractors' public liability insurance, contractors' risk and method statements, BSEN 40 structural test of each column and equipment details before Lovell Road lights could be used for Christmas decorations. Council had agreed decorations on five lights and contractor had quoted £25 + VAT to inspect each lamp (£125 + VAT) Proposed by Cllr. Abbott, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders that the quotation be accepted

Resolved

Action

Clerk

14. Playground Inspection Reports:

Report indicated that at The Furlong there were fixings that need replacing on the swing and on the Green, rough edges on the log climber needed smoothing. Report also noted that gaps were opening in the surfacing around various items again and would need repairing in due course.

Contractor had advised that repairs were not urgent and could be held over to next inspection.

Action

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| <p>15. <u>Renewal of Kindergarten Licence to Access Brockwell Meadow</u>
Licence needed to be renewed annually and solicitors had advised that it would cost £250 + VAT to renew. Councillors agreed that Kindergarten should pay for renewal and Clerk to ask if there were legal implications if the licence was extended to three to five years.</p> | <p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Clerk</p> |
| <p>16. <u>Beacon Lighting for D Day 80th anniversary:</u>
Beacons were being lit nationwide at 9.15pm on 06.06.24. to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D Day and Clapham had suggested a joint event at Browns Wood. Council was content to join and Clerk to confirm. Cllr. Walker noted that the beacon socket would need to be moved elsewhere in the field because of trees that had been planted.</p> | <p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Clerk</p> |
| <p>17. <u>Highway Matters:</u>
<u>request for additional streetlights in High Street and Lovell Road</u>
Resident had requested additional streetlights between 62 High Street & the Post Office as there are dropped kerbs which could not be seen in the dark and outside Lovell Homes as the footway is uneven. Council considered that it would not be appropriate to ask for additional lighting in Lovell Road as the developers of the houses in Clapham might be installing lights when they create a cycle path. Clerk to request latest details of the proposed scheme from Clapham PC. Council also agreed that to add modern lamp posts along the High Street would impinge on the character of this part of the village.
Cllr. R. Saunders was concerned about the trees under the Church Lane bridge. Clerk had asked Bedford BC to remove but would chase. He also requested that white lines Bromham side of the bridge be re-painted when the Church Lane lines were renewed as there had been six accidents on the bend in recent months.
Cllr. Jones noted that residents were concerned about the potholes in Westfield Road as there were no footways or lights. Clerk to ask Bedford BC to repair.</p> | <p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> |
| <p>18. <u>Borough Council Report:</u>
Cllr. Abbott reported that the Borough AGM would be held 15.05.24. and the make up of the Council remained the same following the Riverfield by election. Oasis pool would be reopening 20.05.24. and the Borough was trialling kerbside glass collections for nine months. If the scheme was then extended new collection vehicles would need to be purchased. Bus routes 50 and 51 would be better co-ordinated in future and a customer satisfaction survey was being carried out for Harrold/Odell Country Park. He confirmed that The Range had purchased the former Wilkinson site.
Cllr. Walker added that live bus information was available on the app in the rural area. The old civic theatre had re-opened as a Customer Service Centre and appointments were not needed. It was also hoped to re-open the Tourist Information Centre.</p> | <p><u>Action</u></p> |

19. Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:**Decisions notified since Council meeting – 5th March 2024**

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

Parish No objection

Comments:

Decision/Date Refusal 28.03.24. 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 and Ruffs Furze, owing to the increased height and width at first floor level.

Application No. **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:

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.

Decision/Date Refusal 17.04.24. on the grounds that it was a cramped and contrived proposal, out of keeping with the surroundings and with inadequate access, plus there was lack of adequate parking space and recycling storage and access arrangements and no biodiversity net gain information

Applications received since Council meeting – 9th January 2024

Application No. **a) 24/00688/FUL** - single storey rear/side extension, incorporating garage conversion and replacement pitched roof over existing flat roof at 8 Ruffs Furze

Parish No objection

Comments

Application No. **b) 24/00661/MAF** - demolition of two existing temporary teaching blocks on the site, associated site compound buildings and office/meeting area bungalow to accommodate a new fit for purpose three storey teaching block at Lincroft Academy

Parish No objection
Comments

Application No. **c) 24/00850/FUL** - one & two storey front, side & rear extensions with balcony to rear, insertion of window to ground floor side elevation and associated alterations at 7 Pavenham Road

Parish No objection
Comments

Application No. **d) 24/00872/S73** - change of use from hairdressers/beauty salon to dwelling house and external alterations, including variation of approved plan condition 2 attached to 21/01036/FUL, to allow for changes to the internal layout and elevations at 40 High Street

Parish No objection
Comments

Application No. **e) 24/00907/FUL** for a single storey side extension, conversion of garage, driveway extension and minor alterations at 43 Dewlands

Parish No objection
Comments

Application No. **f) 24/00915/FUL** - single storey side extension plus retention of rooflights, decking, 2 sheds and polytunnel at Courtyard Barn, The Drive

Parish No objection
Comments

20. Planning Policy:

letter from DHLUC concerning Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)

Chair commented that Mr. Fuller MP had received a response from DHLUC advising that they could not comment on local matters but Government remained committed to neighbourhood planning and ensuring NDPs continue to have an important role in the planning system. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was clear that, where a planning application conflicted with an up-to-date development plan (including any NDP), permission should not usually be granted. However, the letter noted that planning applications are decided in accordance with the development plan (including any NDP) unless material considerations indicate otherwise and it is for the decision-taker in each case to determine what is a material consideration and what weight to give to it. Therefore, the NPPF did not entirely rule out giving permission where the decision-taker considered that other material considerations outweighed the conflict with the plan. Chair commented that Oakley was fortunate to have the river and railway boundaries to contain development.

Action

21. Correspondence:Action**a) invitation to visit Lincroft School following parents' concerns about SEN support**

A meeting had been held by some concerned parents about Lincroft School's lack of support for parents/carers of children with SEN. In response Lincroft had written to Council advising that they operated an inclusive enhanced resource provision for 28 children on the autistic spectrum, were improving facilities and had worked hard to raise standards around behaviour. They invited councillors to visit and see the support in place and the progress made. Cllr. Abbott had attended the meeting and noted that some genuine concerns had been raised but the tone of the meeting was not very constructive. Cllr. Walker would be visiting the school.

b) Bedford BC consultation on new EV charging points

Bedford BC was looking to extend the network of EV charging points and had asked parish councils about issues in their local area. Oakley was one of the sites suggested and Council agreed that roads were too narrow and laybys were in use for parking. Therefore, they would have to be located on premises open to residents with the permission of the owners. The site would also need to be such that it did not encourage ASB.

Clerk

c) Bedford BC Public Rights of Way Improvement (PRoW) Plan 2024-2029

Bedford BC was consulting on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2024-2029. It aimed to ensure the PRoW network was valued as an asset; improve service provision and working with network users; provide a well maintained, safe and easily accessible network; get residents involved; provide information and promote the network. Parish Councils would be key partners in installing structures on the network, working on local projects for which small amounts of funding might be available, minimising dog fouling, distributing information and the programme of seasonal vegetation clearance. Council supported the Plan.

22. Grant Applications:Action**a) Country Days**

Country Days had requested a grant of £1,000 for their combined Easter and Summer outdoor learning courses. The courses are open to 7 - 11 year olds and designed to develop skills which enhance their educational and emotional development and foster an interest in and a love of the natural environment particularly for students who have little or no access to the countryside. Total cost of project was £46,000 and balance would be obtained from fundraising, donations and other funders. Previous grants – £100 in May 2022 and £50 in May 2023. 15 children that either live in Oakley or come from the primary schools in the area had attended the courses. Balance of £101,552 at 31.12.22. of which £28,526 was the operating profit.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Jones that £50.00 be granted
Resolved S. 137 donation

Clerk

b) Oakley Kindergarten

Oakley Kindergarten had requested a grant of £1,000.00 for a large, secure, wooden outdoor buggy store. Total cost of project was £1,250.00 and the balance would be obtained by fund raising from an Easter egg trail and commission on photographs. Previous grants – £150 – 2002, £450 – 2003, £300 – 2004, £14,322 s. 106 from The Furlong – 2008, £430 – 2010, £1,000 – 2011, £1,000 – 2019, £1,000 – 2020, £1,000 – 2021, £500 - 2022. Council also paid solicitors’ fees of £1,081.50 for licence to access Brockwell in 2023. 65% of staff and children are Oakley residents. Balance of £359,886 at 31.12.22. Unrestricted funds were kept at a minimum level equal to three months’ employment costs i.e. approximately £26,000 at 2022 levels but because of new build costs only £4,723 was available at 31.12.22. Due to the transfer to a CIO on 01.03.24. next accounting period would cover 14 months to 29.02.24. and figures were not yet available.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Bays that £750.00 be granted

Resolved S. 137 donation

Clerk

23. Finance Matters:

Action

a) accounts to pay

Income and balances:

NatWest Bank - Current account balance at 30.04.24.	£39,846.34
NatWest Bank – Business Reserve account balance at 30.04.24.	£2,387.09
Nationwide - Savings Bond	£63,147.25
Hampshire Trust - Savings Bond	£85,013.20

Received since last meeting:

HTB	Interest	3,105.06
Bedford BC	Precept - first half	29,100.00
Hamshere	Allotment rent	10.00
Worker	April quiz	275.32
HMRC	2023/24 VAT refund	5,654.02
Nationwide	Interest	2,140.82
NatWest	Interest	3.13
	Total	40,288.35

Payments Already Made:

Chq. No.

Old School	Rent for upper rooms April	153.83	s/o
Salaries	April payment	1,588.21	s/o
Pension Fund	April payment	539.95	1931

Payments Made:

Bedford BC	Quarterly grass cutting 2023/24	2,714.89	1932
	Website hosting & management		
Bays	2024/25	1,280.00	1933
Betts	Internal audit fee	155.00	1934
	Hire of Hall 15.03.24. & 19.04.24.		
Village Hall	for quiz	112.00	1935
Paice	Expenses January - March	34.33	1936
Pension Fund	May payment	539.95	1937
	Total	7,118.16	

b) Internal Audit report

Internal audit had been carried out 10.04.23. Auditor had no matters to bring to Council’s attention. Council thanked the Clerk.

c) Annual Governance Statement

Council considered the Annual Governance Statement and Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Abbott that the Annual Governance Statement be approved.

Resolved

Clerk and Chair signed section 1 of the audit return.

d) 2023/24 end of year accounts

Clerk had circulated accounts.

Proposed by Cllr. Olney, seconded by Cllr. Jones that the accounts and section 2 of the audit return be approved.

Resolved

Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer and Chair signed accounts.

Clerk and Chair signed section 2 of the audit return.

e) Annual review of risk assessment policy

Clerk had circulated a draft risk assessment for 2024/25, which was unchanged. Proposed by Cllr. Bays, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders, that the risk assessment be adopted

Resolved

f) Annual review of internal audit system

Clerk had circulated a draft Audit Plan for 2024/25. Terms of Reference remained unchanged

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Bays that the Audit Plan be adopted

Resolved

g) Review of direct debits & standing orders

Proposed by Cllr. Jones, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders that Council continue to make monthly standing order payments for salaries and £153.83 to the Old School for rent of rooms, annual direct debit payment of £420 to Bedford BC for allotment rent and to pay variable direct debit payments to Anglian Water for allotment water

Resolved

Clerk

h) installation of new defibrillator

Methodist Church had no funds to install the defibrillator and contractor had quoted £312.00 + VAT to fit to the wall and connect to the electricity supply
Proposed by Cllr. Abbott, seconded by Cllr. Jones that the quotation be accepted

Resolved

Clerk

i) Clerk's expenses

Proposed by Cllr. Walker, seconded by Cllr. T. Saunders that expenses of 34.33 for the period January to March 2024 be paid

Resolved

24. Date of Next Meeting: 4th June 2024