

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3rd December 2024 in the Village Hall

PRESENT:

Cllr. Fardon (Chair), C Bays, P. Jones, Cllr. R. Saunders, T. Saunders, P. White, C. Worker, R. Worker, the Clerk, Mrs. Paice and 0 members of the public

1. **Public Open Session:** none

2. **Apologies** J. Abbott (business), P. Olney (personal), J. Walker (illness)

3. **Declarations of Interest:**

Cllr. Bays for item 18 as a relative of the OSSC Chair

4. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th November 2024:**

Resolved: to adopt the minutes.

5. **Clerk's Report:**

Highways – the bollard in Burleigh Place/Lincroft path was rotten, a drain in Ruffs Furze alleyway was blocked and a tree had fallen on the Church Lane/Lovell Road footway. Clerk had asked Bedford BC to replace the bollard, clear the drain and remove the tree. The High Street had been closed because of a gas leak and the Post Office was concerned that diversion signs were not clear and no-one was working on site. Clerk had contacted Cadent and the road re-opened 03.12.24. Bedford BC had advised that bollards would now be installed in The Furlong by the end of January and Clerk to ask Highways to ensure they were in place by then.

Trees – Bedford BC had advised that the tree on the small Grenidge Way green had been pruned to clear the footpath for pedestrians and was no longer causing an obstruction so no further pruning work was required at present. Contractor had volunteered to lift the tree above The Furlong play area free of charge.

CPRE Hedge Project – the agreement for the new hedge in Riverside Meadow had been signed

Speed Watch – event on 19.11.24. in Highfield Road cancelled due to poor weather. There was a nil return for the event on 27.11.24. in Church Lane. Bedford BC would be contacting Speed Watch to discuss the exact locations of new poles for their device

Litter bins – all bins were emptied during November but some dog bins missed and reported to Bedford BC. New bin had been installed on the Green.

Fly tipping – goal dumped in Dewlands reported to Bedford BC and removed

Quiz – profit for November quiz was £235.00. Cllr. C. Worker had made a wreath for the Church display and Council thanked her.

Clerk

<p>6. <u>Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th November 2024</u> : none</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p>
<p>7. Reports:-</p> <p>a) ORA Meeting 19.11.24.</p> <p>Cllrs. R. Worker and T. Saunders attended. ORA reported that a Halloween Disco had been held in Half Term and they planned to hold a similar event in 2025. The Fireworks Night event was very successful with attendance of 1908. All ticket revenue was ploughed back into the event. One concern about parking was raised and OSSC had advised that they would consider additional parking controls next year if a similar event was held. A Christmas Fete and Market would be held on 14.12.24. The Village Hall was booked that day so parking arrangements were being discussed. A Christmas raffle would be held with the Motor Cycle Club on 12.12.24. with profits donated to the East Anglian Air Ambulance Service (EAAA). ORA/OSSC had changed their accountants and there would be a delay until the New Year, before the 2023/24 accounts could be presented to Council. ORA had requested a grant from Council – see item 18. Poker continued to be popular and AFC Oakley was live streaming adult matches. Motorcycle Club had had donated £47,000 to EAAA to date. An event was planned in July 2025 to celebrate their 20th Anniversary plus a “ride out” with all profits to EAAA. Club had noticed a small number of instances when members leaving the site were speeding in Church Lane and was discussing with Speed Watch if they could help. A formal note of thanks had been sent from Council to OSSC for supporting the Village Litter Pick and Cllr. Worker reiterated the thanks. The next Village Quiz would take place on 13.12.24. the day before the Christmas Fete, so the Village Hall car park should not be used for setting up. There were no reports from Classic Cars, AFC Oakley, Darts, Pool or Pétanque organisations.</p> <p>b) Villager Minibus AGM 20.11.24.</p> <p>Cllr. C. Worker attended and reported that the Villager Bus thanked Council for their donation and support and were pleased she had attended as she was the only Parish representative. The Kempston bus had folded because of lack of volunteers and the balance of their funds had been donated to the Villager Bus. These would be allocated to repair/replace the bus. The bus could be hired by community groups and fares would rise to £3.00 in January for those without a bus pass.</p>	
<p>8. East West Rail (EWR):</p> <p>EWR was holding a non-statutory consultation. Clerk had asked EWR where a multi storey car park would be sited and the consultation document indicated that it would be on hospital owned land west of the proposed tracks and was expected to be up to nine floors in height.</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p>

Council agreed to respond, reiterating concerns about hospital parking and raising concerns about the line at Ravensden given the underground gas problem at Cleat Hill, building on a flood plain at Clapham and the noise impact on Bedford Greenacre Independent School in Clapham Road. Council would also reiterate that electrification should be carried out during construction not at a later date. Councillors noted that no pile driving/soil sampling would be permitted at Ravensden until geological surveys had been completed and Mr. Fuller MP was objecting to the proposals because of the gas issue.

Clerk

9. Police Report:

There were 2 reported crimes in the first half of November, 1 sexual offence and 1 criminal damage to a business building.

Action**10. Allotments:****a) Clearing ditch**

Contractor agreed for The Furlong ditch had quoted £800 + VAT (the same price as in 2022) if work was done at the same time as The Furlong ditch. No other quotations received.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. Bays that quotation for £800.00 + VAT be accepted

ResolvedAction

Clerk

b) trimming ash tree and hedge

Contractor had quoted £400 + VAT to trim back the overhanging trees and taller vegetation to the fence adjacent to The Furlong and reduce & remove limbs from the ash at the entrance which were leaning towards the allotment.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Worker, seconded by Cllr. R. Saunders that quotation for £400 + VAT be accepted

Resolved

Clerk

11. Lease for Land at Oakley Bridges:

Lease for the land had expired in 2023 and Council had agreed to renew. Solicitors had quoted £1,250 - £1,500 + VAT for renewal and Oakley Properties had suggested Council contribute 50% of the legal fees.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Worker, seconded by Cllr. C. Worker that proposal that Council pay 50% of fees + VAT be accepted

ResolvedAction

Clerk

12. Replacement Posts on the Green:

There was a gap in the posts on the Green where the tree on the corner had been felled. Contractor had quoted £375 + VAT to install two new posts. Councillors to inspect the site to ascertain whether posts were needed and reconsider in January.

Action

Clerk

<p>13. <u>Grass Cutting Contract for 2025/26:</u> Clerk had requested quotations from seven companies for grass and hedge cutting and received four for £47,060.70; £15,470; 15,425 and £9,294.03 year one and £9,502.13 year two; Proposed by Cllr. White, seconded by Cllr .R. Saunders that the two year contract for £9,294.03 year one and £9,502.13 year two + VAT be accepted Resolved</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>14. <u>Highway Matters:</u> removal of trees adjacent to twin bridges Clerk had requested quotations to remove the trees and received one for £580 + VAT to remove the yew tree and various smaller self set hawthorns with eco plugs drilled into the stumps to stop regrowth. Contractor had noted that due to the position of the tree a 3 man team would be required to carry out the removal to avoid the expense of traffic lights or a road closure. Clerk had asked Bedford BC about involving English Heritage and awaiting a response. Clerk to ask contractor to contact them direct. Proposed by Cllr. Bays, seconded by Cllr. Jones that quotation for £580.00 + VAT be accepted Resolved</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>Cllr. C. Worker noted that not all the white lines in Church Lane had been repainted. Clerk to pursue Cllrs. Bays and Jones reported potholes in Reynes Drive and Ruffs Furze and Clerk to ask Highways to repair. Councillors noted that verges had been damaged in Lincroft, Station Road and on the green at the crossroads. Clerk to ask Highways to repair. Clerk to ask Cllr. Abbott to arrange a walk around the village with a Highways inspector.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>15. <u>Borough Council Report:</u> No report in the absence of Cllrs. Abbott and Walker. Cllr. C. Worker was concerned that planning consent had been given for new units at the Interchange Retail Park when shops in Bedford were empty.</p>	<p><u>Action</u></p> <p>JA/JW</p>
<p>16. <u>Planning Applications and Decisions and other planning matters:</u> Decisions notified since Council meeting – 5th November 2024 Application No. 24/01861/TPO – pruning of horse chestnut and maple at Tamarind, Westfield Road Parish No objection Comments: Decision/Date: Permission 06.11.24.</p>	

Application No. **24/01637/FUL** - demolition of existing garage & utility, erection of two storey front extension, first floor rear extension & single storey side extension at 20 Reynes Drive
Parish No objection
Comments:
Decision/Date: Permission 08.11.24.

Parish **24/01826/TPO** – removal of 4 low branches of oak over garage &
Comments: pruning of remaining crown at Archway Westfield Road
Decision/Date: No objection
Permission 27.11.24.

Clerk noted that a certificate to confirm lawful commencement of development and existing building works at 40 High Street had been granted.

Applications received since Council meeting – 5th November 2024

Application No. **a) 24/01706/FUL amended** - two storey side extension & front porch, new access & parking at 13 Church Lane
Parish No objection
Comments

Application No. **b) 24/02237/TPO** – reduction of horse chestnut at Longways, The Drive
Parish No objection
Comments

17. Correspondence:

a) Government consultation on remote meetings

Government was consulting on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting by councillors at local authority meetings, including town and parish councils. Council agreed that members should only be able to attend council meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, e.g. those who are medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies and that meetings should be changed from in-person to online, or vice versa, due to unforeseen and exceptional circumstances only. Council did not support proxy voting.

Action

Clerk

b) request that Council purchase a PA system for Remembrance Service

Resident had requested Council purchase a PA system for Remembrance Services as the current system was borrowed and might not always be available. Cllr. Jones commented that the benefice had their own PA, which could be used if necessary. Clerk noted that monies had not been budgeted for a PA system and Council would need to find somewhere to store it. Cllr. White volunteered to ask a local contractor for advice and possible loan of a system.

PW

c) Bedford BC consultation on 2025/26 budget

Bedford BC was consulting on proposals for its 2025/26 budget, in particular which were highest priority services, reviewing staffing structure and scope, early interventions to manage demand better, effective contract management, reducing bureaucracy & digitising services and investing in infrastructure. Council had no comments.

18. Grant Applications:

Oakley Sports & Social Club had requested a grant at Council’s discretion to support their Community Christmas Fete. Total cost of the event was £2,800 - £3,000 + VAT and the balance of the costs to be taken from membership funds. Previous grants of £500 in 2022 and £1,000 in 2011 to ORA plus £1,000 in 2011 to OSSC. Individual sports clubs also received grants between 2016 and 2009. 886 (49%) of members included “Oakley” in their street address but the number of Oakley members might be higher. Event would be open to all Oakley residents. 2023/24 accounts were not yet available and ORA had a balance of £2,177 at 31.03.23. Clerk noted that £2K remained in the budget.

Proposed by Cllr. White, seconded by Cllr. Jones that donation of £400 be granted

Rejected

Proposed by Cllr. R. Worker, seconded by Chair that donation of £500 be granted

Resolved - S. 137 donation

Council noted that 2023/24 accounts should be forwarded by the end of January 2025 and no further grants would be payable without up to date accounts.

Action

Clerk

19. Finance Matters:

a) accounts to pay

Income and balances:

NatWest Bank - Current account balance at 30.11.24.	£30,930.44
NatWest Bank – Business Reserve account balance at 30.11.24.	£2,407.08
Nationwide - Savings Bond	£63,147.25
Hampshire Trust - Savings Bond	£85,013.20

Received since last meeting:

Exon	Allotment rent	21.15
Whatley	Allotment rent	42.30
Wright	Allotment rent	21.15
Webster	Allotment rent	21.15
Fordham	Allotment rent	21.15
Handmade Books	Newsletter advertising	£30.00
Worker	November quiz	£291.00
Abbott	Donation for flag	£9.55
NatWest	Interest	£2.58

Total £460.03

Action

Payments Already Made:			Chq. No.
Old School	Rent for upper rooms November	153.83	s/o
Salaries	November payment	1,588.21	s/o
Creative Support	Quiz donation	150.00	1979
Oakley Day Centre	Quiz donation	150.00	1980
Bedfordshire Pension Fund	November payment	644.50	1981
Payments Made:			
White Hart Press	Printing Newsletter	865.00	1982
V C Property Maintenance	Replacement bollards on the Green	948.00	1983
A Smith	Microsoft 365 for Directory	79.99	1984
Nicholas	Allotment tap repairs and lock for gate	48.49	1985
Paice	Salary arrears	279.98	1986
Oakley Village Hall	Hire of Committee Room 03.12.24.	22.50	1987
R Plum	Remembrance poppy wreath	25.00	1988
Oakley Properties	Rent for land at Oakley bridges	100.00	1989
		Total	£5,055.50

b) 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 but remind her to wear a high vis vest. Living wage to increase w.e.f. 01.04.25. to £12.21 per hour equating to £455.84 per month

Proposed by Cllr. C. Worker, seconded by Cllr. White that salary be increased to £455.84 per month w.e.f. 01.04.25.

Resolved

Assuming 30 minutes per shelter per month at national living wage, bus shelter cleaning wage would increase to £42.74 per month w.e.f. 01.04.25.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Worker, seconded by Cllr. C. Worker that wage be increased to £42.74 per month w.e.f. 01.04.25.

Resolved

Clerk noted that as a result of the new NI regulations effective from 01.04.25, Council would need to begin paying Employer NI contributions on the litter picker/bus shelter cleaner's wage.

c) amendment to standing orders

Following the recent pay award, the standing order for the Clerk's salary would need to be changed.

Proposed by Cllr. R. Saunders, seconded by Cllr. White that standing order be amended to £1,190.46 p.m.

Resolved

Action

Clerk

Clerk

Clerk

d) new projects 2025/26

Clerk had included £600 for a new seat in the play area on the Green and £4,000 for new balancing equipment in the draft budget for 2025/26. Cllr. Bays suggested play panels instead of balancing equipment as these would be more accessible and would not require safety surfacing. Chair noted that the footway from Lovell Road to the Church needed improving and Council to ask Cllrs. Abbott and Walker to fund from their 2025 Ward Fund.

JA/JW

- 20. Date of Next Meeting:** 02.01.25. Finance Advisory Group
07.01.25.