

BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Berkswich Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at 7.30 pm at Walton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Alan Taylor (Chair), Cllr Caroline Pearson (Vice Chair), Cllr Sue Francis, Cllr Tim Luker, Cllr Malcolm Millichap, Cllr Ann Millichap, Cllr Bob Gilson, Cllr Michael Norris, Cllr Beverley Hughes, and Cllr Vicky Campbell.

In attendance: Three members of the public and Mrs Sue Fullwood as Clerk.

Cllr Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 Public session

a Articulated Lorries Damaging verges near Milford Common

The first member of the public raised the issue of 40-ton articulated lorries entering and leaving R&J Aggregates at The Green. The lorries were damaging the grass verges on the edge of The Green when entering their leased site and the corner of Brocton Road when leaving the site to return to their sales area at Brocton Business Park. The member of the public circulated photos of both areas of damage. There were never any problems when H Nickolls & Son were operating from the site, but the drivers from R&J Aggregates don't seem interested in caring for the village. They were driving over the service manholes which were now uncovered. The first member of the public said that tractors and other agricultural vehicles could be responsible for some of the damage on the corner of Brocton Road, but the damage to The Green was solely from R&J. Cllr Taylor responded that councillors would view the damage for themselves and if they felt that the damage caused warranted it, the Clerk would contact Staffordshire County Council as the Highways Agency and R&J Aggregates expressing concern at what is happening there. Cllr Norris added that he suspected that Nickolls' drivers had waited for the road to be clear before turning so that they could go onto the other side of the road. **Action: Cllrs/Clerk**

b Speed Sensors around Milford Common

The first member of the public informed the Parish Council that Milford Common had a new site manager and they were making plans including finishing off the ditch and bunding, installing wooden bollards, planting trees and were considering a height restriction at the entrance to the car park. The member of the public had met the site manager and County Councillor John Francis on site to discuss the proposed changes. The reduced speed limit to 30mph on Brocton Road was due to be implemented by the end of February, but work hadn't yet started. The member of the public asked if the Parish Council would consider installing speed warning sensors along Brocton Road.

c HGVs using Bridges on Holdiford Road

The second member of the public said that there were a lot of HGVs going over the bridges and they were shaking their home when they passed so they must be damaging the bridges including the Grade II listed Holdiford Bridge. Both bridges were in need of repair and some of the stones on the top of the canal bridge had been loosened and could be dangerous for people passing under the bridge. The canal bridge also had gouges in the surface where long vehicles were grounding on the top. Blue signage near the bridges said that the road was unsuitable for vehicles over 7.5tn, but it was only advisory. **Resolved:** Cllr Taylor would inspect the bridges himself and then ask the Clerk to write to Highways at SCC asking for a weight limit to be put on. **Action: Cllr Taylor/Clerk**

- 24/23** **Apologies** – Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Edgeller of Stafford Borough Council as he was at an SBC meeting.
- 24/24** **To record Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda.** None.
- 24/25** **Minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 January 2024 – Resolved:** It was agreed that the minutes were accurate. Re item 24/13, Cllr M Millichap informed the council that he had contacted the person from the Phoenix Military History group and said that the event would not be going ahead and thanked him for his interest.
- 24/30** **Lighting Issues at Dora Rose Nursing Home**
This item was moved up the agenda so that the three members of the public could be in attendance. Cllr Taylor had visited the site in the dark and had been astonished at the way it was lit up. Planning permission had been given for 5 permanent lighting columns that the light would not spread from, but they were lots of different lights set up. Staff at Dora Rose had said that they had received lots of complaints from visitors to the home who said that they couldn't see at night. The staff were aware of issues with the neighbours regarding lighting and said that staff from the head office in Birmingham were liaising with SBC about the planning conditions. Cllr Taylor had contacted the planning team at SBC who had said they were unaware of any discussions about the Home. The Clerk had written to the SBC enforcement team expressing concern that the lighting was not in accordance with planning conditions and the issue was now in their hands.
- The three members of the public left the meeting at 8.07pm.
- 24/26** **Clerks Report for February 2024**
In consultation with the Chairman, the Clerk had agreed to prepare a monthly report detailing work undertaken on behalf of the Council that was not already on the agenda. A discussion took place around whether Matters Arising should form part of the agenda and Cllr Pearson clarified that the Good Councillors' Guide confirmed that they shouldn't. Cllr M Millichap thanked the Clerk for her work on the issues with WR Davies.
- 24/27** **Defibrillator Grant Application**
The Methodist Church should be asked to complete a formal application form if they wished to continue to apply for funding for a defibrillator. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/28** **Possible use of Walton Coppice by the Scouts**
The local Scout group had emailed a letter to Cllr Taylor that day offering to help maintain Walton Coppice and asking if they could use it for nature walks and den building. Cllr Francis expressed concerns about them using the whole site and being allowed to disturb wildlife. Cllr Luker said that there were ways around that such as restricting access during the breeding season from March to May. Cllr Norris said that caution should be given to allowing Scouts to use the site, but not anyone else, it could be setting a precedent. He also felt that the Council should see evidence of Risk Assessments and insurance cover. The Clerk would share the email from the Scouts with the rest of the Council. **Action: Clerk**
- 24/29** **Waste Bin Sites Within the Parish**
The Clerk had obtained a list of waste bins in the parish from Streetscene at SBC and plotted them onto a map. Cllr Taylor felt that giving SBC a list of places where we would like bins would be better than lots of individual contact and suggested that this item be considered at the next meeting. Clerk to ask for suggestions from residents on Facebook and in the Spring Newsletter. **Action: Clerk**

24/30 **Lighting Issues at Dora Rose Nursing Home** (see above).

24/31 **Financial Matters:**

- i. **Bank Reconciliation and Expenditure for February 2024 – Resolved:** The bank reconciliation and expenditure were unanimously approved.

Bank Reconciliation as at 21 February 2024

Receipts			
Company	Description	Amount	Date Received
Total Receipts		£0.00	

Payments						
Paid to	Description	Invoice date	Cheque #	Gross Incl. VAT	VAT	Net
Groundsman Tools Ltd	4 x planting spade	26/02/2024	825	£129.89	£21.65	£108.24
Rob Keyzor Tree Surgeons Ltd	Trim 41m hedge at Walton Coppice	23/02/2024	826	£648.00	£108.00	£540.00
Lichfield Treeworks Ltd	Felling & flailing at Walton Coppice	21/02/2024	827	£4,850.00	£808.33	£4,041.67
Staffs Pension Fund	Employer & employee LGPS contributions Feb 24	29/02/2024	828	£295.36	£0.00	£295.36
HMRC	Employer NI Feb 24	29/02/2024	829	£30.81	£0.00	£30.81
Hedges Direct	Wild cherry trees, canes & guards	29/02/2024	831	£932.26	£155.38	£776.88
Mrs Sue Fullwood	Clerk salary & expenses Feb 24	29/02/2024	832	£1,950.71	£0.00	£1,950.71
Braemar Arboriculture Ltd	Tree survey at Hollybush Coppice	04/03/2024	834	£420.00	£70.00	£350.00
Cllr Alan Taylor	Reimbursement for 6 x Microshovels	04/03/2024	835	£89.19	£14.87	£74.32
Total Payments				£9,346.22	£1,178.23	£8,167.99

Cashbook

Opening Balance at 20.01.2024 11,890.81

Add:
Receipts 20.01.2024 to 21.02.2024 0.00

Less
Payments 20.01.2024 to 21.02.2024 9,346.22

Cashbook Balance at 21.02.2024 2,544.59

Current Account

Bank statement Balance at 20.01.2024 15,331.19

Less payments made
Chq no.s 811, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824 3,427.63

Chq No.s	Amount
(Cllr V Campbell) 791	£12.75
825	£129.89
826	£648.00
827	£4,850.00
828	£295.36
829	£30.81
831	£932.26
832	£1,950.71
834	£420.00
835	£89.19
	9358.97

Add: receipts 0.00

Add: Unpresented Receipts 0.00

C/A balance 21.02.2024 carried forward 11903.56

Available funds in C/A 2544.59

- ii **Budget Report for February 2024** - Cllr M Millichap asked the Clerk to calculate exactly how much money was owed to HMRC for the VAT that should not have been reclaimed and to add a footnote to the report stating how much grant funding was still outstanding. **Action: Clerk Resolved:** the report was unanimously approved.

Budget Report February 2024

RECEIPTS	To date	Budget	Less / more than budget
Precept	27,745	27,745	-0
Council tax support grant	1,231	1,231	0
SBC (Concurrent Function Allowance)	1,507	1,507	0
SCC Minor Highways Agreement	2,662	2,200	462
Interest Stafford Railway BS A/c	0	250	-250
Interest Teachers A/c	1,002	200	802
Interest Hampshire Trust	36	75	-39
Grants	11,211	0	11,211
Misc. Receipts (e.g. VAT reclaim & wayleaves)	12,369	45	12,324
Total income	£ 57,763	£ 33,253	£ 24,510

PAYMENTS	To date	Budget	Under / Over budget
Staff costs	14,529	15,050	521
Office costs	3,430	3,492	62
Maintenance costs	9,866	11,400	1,534
Additional maintenance	9,019	600	-8,419
Play Area	103	590	487
Capital purchases	613	-	-613
Community support	285	1,565	1,280
Projects	8,848	700	-8,148
Total Expenditure	£ 46,693	£ 33,397	-£ 13,296

Earmarked Funds Allocation

Elections	£10,000
Crime Prevention Measures	£24,000
Walton Coppice Maintenance Fund	£12,500
Hollybush Coppice Maintenance Fund	£10,000
Asset Replacement Fund	£45,000
Environmental Care	£35,000
General Reserve	£16,284
Total funds	£152,784

24/32 Reports from other Meetings

- i. **Environment Group** – Cllr Luker reported that the second working party held on 3 March at Walton Coppice had gone very well, but it had been a long day, finishing at 4.30 pm. Around 30-40 Scouts had attended and they had done a great deal of work. Cllr Taylor, Cllr Luker and one other person had returned on the morning of 5 March to complete the planting and there were still quite a lot of plants left. Cllr Taylor added that the contracted tree surgeon had done an enormous amount of work for a limited budget. He had chopped down more trees than anticipated and opened up the coppice extraordinarily well. There was a lot more light getting to the gardens of the houses on Bluebell Hollow and the site looked a lot better. Cllr M Millichap asked for thanks to be recorded to the Environment Group and suggested that the Clerk should write to BCV and the Scouts thanking them for their contribution. **Action: Clerk**
- ii. **Village Hall Council of Management** – Cllr Pearson reported that there had been no meeting in February. The AGM was scheduled to take place in March.

24/22 Agenda Items for the Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 2 April 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Main Hall, Walton Village Hall

Agenda items agreed were: defibrillator grant application; Parish Fete; Flower Beds on Main Road; waste bin sites; and data from SIDs.

The meeting closed at 8:50 pm.