

BEDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

(draft) Minutes of a Bedfield Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 15th February 2024 held at the Bedfield Community HUB Pavilion. The meeting commenced at 19:30

02/24 - 01 Present

- Alison Manning (Chair - AM), John Dickson (Vice Chair – JD), Marion Harvey (MH) Martin Abley (MA) , Lisa Crane (LC), Jenny Barham (JB) and Michael Walsh (MW).
- Geoff Robinson (GR) as Parish Clerk.
- Andrew Manning (ANM) as Community Club representative.
- Jane Sullivan (JS) on behalf of the Friends of Bedfield Heritage Group.
- Matthew Hicks (MH) MSDC and SCC Ward Councillor (for Item 02/24 – 05 below).
- Six members of the public

02/24 - 02 Apologies for Absence

- Three members of the public.

02/24 - 03 Register of Members Interests

- All the councillors were reminded that they must notify GR of any changes affecting their Register of Members Interests. There were no changes declared.

02/24 - 04 Public Open Session

- Great concern was expressed about the ongoing flooding at Tannington Road corner, which has been liable to flooding, over a number of years. However, this had come to a head during Storm Babet when several houses had been flooded internally. The flooding still persists in Tannington Road and increases every time heavy rain falls.
- Since the 15th January 2024, matter had been reported at least six times to SCC Highways, but little, if anything, has been done to determine the cause and ultimate solution to the ongoing problem. One of these reports showed that action had been completed, which is clearly incorrect.
- Several possible reasons were discussed by those present. MA had volunteered to speak to all those affected, plus nearby residents and had already started this task. He will then attempt to identify the source of the problems for rectification by SCC Highways.
- See also the comments of MH at Item 02/24 – 5 below.

02/24 - 05 Report from Matthew Hicks, County Council and District Council Ward Councillor

- MH attended, having just concluded a meeting of the SCC Finance Committee and the salient points of his update were:
- SCC has set a budget of £752 million and is facing financial challenges not seen for a number of years, mainly due to a fall in central government funding. 77% of this budget will go on the care of vulnerable adults and children. Unfortunately, SCC will have to make 234 staff redundant and increase the precept, as well as taking money from their reserves. Other cutbacks will affect the arts and county archive services. In the case of the arts, future funding will be specific project funding. The overall situation is far from ideal, but unpleasant decisions have had to be made to balance its books.
- MH made a plea for anyone with an interest in becoming foster parents to contact SCC, because, as always, they are short of people in this important area of community care.
- The national trading standards team, based at Felixstowe, were being highly successful, one area being in seizing illegal vapes. This problem was widespread, and it was very difficult to identify the illegal vapes from genuine products.
- MH was aware of the problems caused by the flooding at Tannington Road corner (see Item 02/24 – 04 above) and agreed that the situation was unacceptable. He has arranged with SCC Highways for them to escalate their actions to identify and resolve the problem urgently. He said that where property is at risk or such flooding occurs, he should be contacted, through GR as Clerk, if necessary.

02/24 - 06 Minutes of the Last Meeting (30th November 2023)

- These were subsequently agreed as accurate and were signed by AM as Chair.

02/24 - 07 Matters Arising from the Minutes

- None.

02/24 - 08 Financial Update

- Expenditure since the last (November) meeting had been £19.99 (Royal British Legion - Remembrance Day Wreath) and the website annual subscription of £46.00 (CAS).
- Bank interest was the only income during the same period from Barclays of £0.33. The £1,000.00 from the Environment Agency may be received in the current financial current year, but it's more likely to be in 2024/25.
- GR produced an estimate for the rest of the 2023/24 year, that without prejudice to any unforeseen circumstances, would require payments of £1014.24 (Clerk's second half year salary, PAYE and arrears), £161.00. (Similarly, his expenses), and £6.00 to SCC for a copy of the Long Green Commons Register. All were approved for payment.
- He anticipated a balance on the 31st of March 2024 of circa £3844.31. This is much better than the balance at the 1st April 2023 of £1805.25. However, an unexpected expense during 2024/25 will include circa £660.00 for cPAD expenses and a well beyond inflation charge for the dog-bin emptying service from MSDC. CIL receipts of £3182.76 are expected during 2024/25, the first payment being due in April 2024
- The 2024/25 precept had been agreed with MSDC.
- Paul Burrows was appointed Local Auditor for the 2023/24 accounts and has accepted the role.
- JS presented a request for the Parish Council to support the Friends of Bedfield Heritage Group in their quest to have a toilet at the Church. This was unanimously agreed as being for the benefit of all villagers and will lead to a reduction of the planning fee with MSDC of 50%.
- Fairweatherlaw, our solicitors for the impending borehole lease, have said that the Environment Agency had requested the formalisation of the right to cross Long Green and park outside the pavilion. Rebecca Waterman, the Secretary of the Bedfield Town Estate (BTE), has confirmed that The Trustees have no objection to the granting of that right. GR to inform Fairweatherlaw of this decision and also advise them that we no longer wishes to consider charging for this right.

02/24 - 09 Planning Updates

- DC/23/03499 (Willow Croft - Erection of Seven Dwellings). Supported and with MSDC for a decision.
- DC/23/05050 (Conversion of Barn in Church Lane) - Supported but since withdrawn by the applicant.

02/24 - 10 Police Report

- GR stated that the police website showed no recorded crimes in Bedfield for the period from October to December 2023.

02/24 - 11 Community Club Update

ANM explained several salient items, namely,

- At a meeting of the Tennis Club on the 14th of February 2024, which was also attended by GR and ANM, together with Graham Mobbs, it was agreed that the Tennis Club would operate as a sub-committee of the Community Club under agreed criteria. AHM added that hopefully the "new" Tennis Club can now move on for the benefit of the community. (The decision was subsequently all endorsed during tonight's meeting by the Paish Council as the owners of the tennis court)
- The Community Club had been successful in receiving a grant under the MSDC Winter Warmth Grant and covered the current organisations such as Our Club, the Art & Crafts Club, and even the Pilates. It also applied to the new "Care and Cared for Coffee Morning" group. The required target number of new participants required overall by MSDC had been achieved.
- Plans were starting to be made for the 2024 Village fete, with the first organising meeting to be held in mid-March. The fete will be on Saturday 13th July 2024..
- LC stated that the plans for improvements to the pavilion were still ongoing, but progress was in the hands of the architect as part of the CAS Pro-Help scheme. As this was free at the moment, these were likely to be low priority with the architect and the next step would be to produce various costings. When these were known, further village consultations would take place.

02/24 - 12 Long Green Track Refurbishment

- GR updated the meeting regarding the situation regarding the need to improve the track across Long Green, which was in urgent need of repair and/or replacement. He explained that what should be a simple task was complicated by the rules surrounding the fact that we understood Long Green was a Registered Common. However, it has now been established that it is, in fact, a Registered Village Green, to which an entirely different set of rules apply to any proposed changes! GR has done extensive research into how best to proceed and this is ongoing. He also stated that a charity called the Open Spaces Society was assisting free of charge but had requested that the Parish Council either joined or donate in due course. This was unanimously agreed. GR was thanked for his efforts. Irrespective of the ongoing situation, it was agreed that the best surface for a new drive would be concrete and a ballpark figure of circa £12,000 had been obtained. A more detailed estimate has been requested and two other estimates will be also needed. The meeting unanimously agreed to proceed once the legal situation has been resolved and finance becomes available, with potential sources of funding being grants or anticipated CIL payments.
- JD suggested that the new track should contain speed bumps, together with adequate provision for the “run-off” off of surface water. GR will factor this in with potential contractors.

02/24 - 13 Any Other Business and Correspondence Etc.

- Several potholes had been repaired by SCC Highways and GR asked that any other defects noted should be referred to him. AM reminded the meeting that highway defects could also be reported by anyone using the SCC Highways Reporting Tool. He updated the meeting on some of the items that he had reported recently, although the response from SCC Highways regarding broken finger posts had been disappointing.
- The inspection of the play area for this year was still awaited but may have been done. GR to check with MSDC.
- David Whitham (DW) had completed fifteen surveys in Bedfield and Monk Soham as part of the Thermal Imaging Project and was in liaison direct with the MSDC organisers. DW was thanked for his enthusiasm and efforts on behalf of Bedfield residents. An offer of discounted loft insulation had also been received from MSDC and circulated.
- Rebecca Waterman, the Secretary of the BTE, was still in contact with the Charity Commission who are prepared to allow them to change their constitution, provided a full consultation takes place with villagers. This will be done via the Parish Council website, in a newsletter and on the notice board during March 2024. The BTE will then consider any responses and hopefully be able to amend their (current) Victorian constitution to allow greater flexibility in their distribution of funds, whilst maintaining current links with the school and church. It would also benefit the Community Club and the Parish Council by allowing a longer lease to be agreed (renewal is due later this year) and thus a significant reduction of the associated legal fees, in the longer term. The councillors unanimously expressed their thanks for all the work that Rebecca is doing over this initiative.
- Flyers about the MSDC “Great Litter Pick 2024, the “Disposal of Vapes and the Great British Spring Clean” had all been circulated.
- The Parish Council had been represented by AM at the Royal British Legion Remembrance Service.

02/24 - 14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be the AGM, to be held on Thursday 9th May 2024, commencing at 19:00, followed by the Annual Village Meeting at circa 20:00.

The meeting ended at 20:30.

Chair.....