

BLISWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Address: 8 Compton Way, Earls Barton, NN6 0PL

Email: blisworthparishcouncil@gmail.com

Website: <https://parish.blisworthvillage.org>

(DRAFT)

Minutes of the Meeting of Blisworth Parish Council held on Monday 26 April 2021 7.30 pm.

Present:

- Cllr S Billing
- Cllr S Bunker, Vice Chairman
- Cllr M Field
- Cllr C Gardner
- Cllr A Goss
- Cllr J Hawkins
- Cllr C Read, MBE
- Cllr D Wilson, Chairman

Also present

- Gillian Greaves, Parish Clerk
- 2 Members of the public

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the meeting was held virtually.

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1. To receive apologies. Apologies received from Cllr Wells due to illness, the Council agreed to accept the apologies.
 2. To receive and approve for signature the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the Council held on 1 March 2021. The minutes of meeting held on 1 March 2021 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.
 3. To note any matters arising from the minutes not included on the agenda for report only. Cllr Bunker raised the matter of the action log and how the Council records the actions agreed at the meeting, he gave an example of the state of a footpath and said he was unclear on what had taken place following the meeting. The Clerk explained that she worked through the minutes to carry out the actions in a timely manner but that there was a historic action log that did not include any reference to priority and resources and that the Council need to give consideration about how these actions could be undertaken with limited resources. It was agreed that a work planning meeting would be useful.
 4. To receive declarations of interest under the Council's Code of Conduct related to business on the agenda. Cllr Goss declared an interest in item 29 and Cllr Read in item 21c S/2020/0930/MAO Appeals.
 5. Public Session:
 - a. Members of the public. A member of the public enquired if the Council had considered applying for grants to repair the cemetery wall and mentioned ACRE as being an organisation that might be able to assist. Several issues relating to communication and publication of the agenda were also raised relating to the use of the notice board. Several boat users had been moored for some considerable time and the Canal & River Trust representative advised that many had been asked to move on.
 - b. Councillor Reports. Separate reports from Cllrs S Clarke and A Brown had been received and circulated prior to the meeting.
 6. Response to issues raised in the public session. Noted.
 7. The Council to send deepest condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family on the death of His Royal Highness Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh – Cllr Hawkins proposed that the Council sends it condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family via the online book of condolences. The Council supported this idea and the Clerk agreed to action the request.
 8. Receive Clerk's reports and agree actions. No reports given.
 9. Consider request from the Clerk to carry over 10 hours of unused annual leave allowance into 2021/22. Proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Field. Request approved by the council.

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10. Consider a request for payment to Ann North for providing administrative support during the absence of a Clerk to the Council (November-December 2020). The Chairman thanked Ann North for her support during the period when the Council was without a Clerk. Ann North had invoiced the Council for £100 for payment in respect of producing the agenda, minutes, and letters. Cllr Goss proposed that the Council pay the invoice and Cllr Billing seconded that the Council approved payment of the invoice.
11. Correspondence from former Clerk in respect of banking issues during 2020. The Council to consider a response. (Correspondence circulated prior to the meeting). The Council considered the correspondence from the former Clerk and determined that there was a small discrepancy with one of the signatures on the letter of instruction they received from the Council. The conclusion and admission by the bank following their investigation does not acknowledge that the original letter to close the account had been tampered with. The Council sought advice from Northants CALC for any further action they should take. The Chairman produced a report on the matter to be attached as Appendix A to the minutes.
12. Closed cemetery - update from Cllr Billing.
 - a. Approve contractor and approve budget for cemetery wall repair. Cllr Billing reported that he had obtained two quotes for the works to repair the wall and he proposed that the job was awarded to Broadstone General Builder at a price of £1,055.21 plus VAT, seconded by Cllr Read and the Council approved the contractor and budget.
 - b. Agree further tree maintenance works, quotations, and budget. Cllr Billing informed the Council that there was further tree works to be undertaken but that a proposal would not be coming before the Council until next year.
13. Notification from South Northants Council, Licencing Team regarding WK/202101629 Gurkha Street trading. For information only as consultation deadline 2 April 21 and the company is already trading in Blisworth. The Council noted the recent street food vendors parking on the village hall car park and the increase in litter. Discussed the issue of litter that was escalating due to the street food packaging. The Village Hall Committee has given permission for the street food vendors to use the car park and agreed to raise the issue about litter when they next book the village hall car park. The Clerk to email the licencing department to ask what arrangements are in hand to deal with the increase in litter.
14. Receive a progress report on the draft Financial Management & Risk Assessment. Cllr Bunker reported that he had circulated a draft document to seek comments and would incorporate all received and recirculate prior to agreeing the final version at the May meeting.
15. Consider and approve the draft Asset Register. The draft Asset Register was circulated separately prior to the meeting. It was agreed by all present to approve the draft register in its current format and bring the register back to the Parish Council in six months' time (October) for a further review. Clearly identifying changes from the draft. This action was agreed by the Council.
16. Parish Mapping Workshop feedback and recommendation. Council to consider action and budget implications – Cllr Read reported that he had attended the parish mapping workshop and was impressed that it offered a good way to store the Council's assets and other types of information e.g., grass cutting specifications, local views, and allotments, points of interest. Cllr Read provided information on the 30-day free trial and an annual cost of £115 thereafter. The Council agreed it offered a useful facility and approved Cllr Read testing the 30-day free trial. The matter would be considered further at a future meeting when Cllr Read would undertake a demonstration and ensure that users were able to use the tool.
17. Consider options to renew the Council's insurance which renews on 1 June 2021. The Clerk advised the Council that the Council's insurance policy was due to expire and she would obtain a range of quotations from suitable insurance companies to inform a decision at the next meeting.
18. Subscriptions & fees:
 - a. Approve continuing membership and subscription to Northants CALC for 2021/22.
 - b. Approve reappointing Northants CALC Internal Audit Services for 2021/22.
 - c. Approve the retention of Northants CALC as the Council's Data Protection Officer for 2021/22.Cllr Bunker proposed, seconded by Cllr Read that items 18 a,b & c be approved and the Council **Resolved** to approve subscription and fees for renewal and payment.

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19. Finance & Administration

- a. Approve licence fee for Zoom as required for virtual/hybrid meetings. Proposed by Cllr Gardener, seconded by Cllr Billing, the Council **Resolved** to approve the monthly licence fee of £14.39 for Zoom meetings as required for virtual meetings.
- b. Approve the 5-year hosting domain fee of £80.50 plus VAT for the Council's website. The Council have historically entered into a contract with 1ONOS and the domain fee are collected every 60 months. The Council approved the domain fee and the website hosting fees for 2021/2 which is collected monthly.
- c. Banking update – Clerk to update on the banking situation. The Clerk updated the Council that the issues with the Council's NatWest bank had been resolved as far as she could ascertain. The need for additional signatories was agreed and this would be an item on the next agenda – Cllrs to consider if they are prepared to become a signatory and provide the necessary information to the bank. The application to open an account with Unity Trust Bank is still outstanding due to lack of Councillors willing to provide the information and/or volunteer.
- d. Consider a proposal to keep a second bank account and agree action. Cllr Bunker proposed that following the previous issues with the Council's bank account that the Council retain a second bank account holding 25% of the Council's annual budget and this was approved. This would be as a precaution once the Utility Trust Bank Account has been opened. It would then be possible to hold an amount in this account as a contingency measure.
- e. Bank Reconciliation 31 March 2021 – separate paper circulated prior to the meeting. The Council approved the reconciliation.
- f. Internal Control Councillor's report – Cllr Bunker reported on the risk and financial management policy and highlighted that one of the main current business continuity risks to the Council is the lack of bank account mandate holders (only 2 currently), and that this should be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- g. Note receipts and approve payments made between 23 March – 31 March (marked **) and April payments. The Chairman reported that an additional amount of £30 had been added to the invoices from N&P for extra works agreed with the contractor. The Council **Resolved** to approve the payments and note the receipts.

RECEIPTS			
Date	Payee	Detail	Amount
12-03-21	NatWest	Refund of bank charges	£84.00
15-03-21	Reid's Play	Refund of duplicate cheque	£5,352.00
PAYMENTS			
CH/DD	Payee	Purpose	Amount (VAT)
002997**	G Greaves	Clerks Salary March	£576.69
002998**	HMRC	Clerks PAYE March	£144.20
002999	G Greaves	Clerk's April Salary	£576.89
003000	HMRC	Clerk's April PAYE	£144.00
003001	G Greaves	Clerk's April Expenses Zoom Licence £14.39 stamps £	£49.72
003002	Barbara Osborne	Payroll Servicers Q4 2020/21	£66.00
003003	N&P Garden Services	Mowing, grass mowing, verges & park w/c 31.03.21 Invoice 3703 including cheque fee £5.00	£689.00 (£114.00)
003004	Northants CALC	Subscription £629.19 Invoice 1011 Internal Audit £225.00 Data Protection Fee £10.00	£864.19
003005	Alan North	Round & About issue 138 production fee £50.00 and Mileage 24 miles @ £0.50p Invoice 08	£62.00
003006	Simon Bunker	Website Hosting (IONOS) fees Oct & Nov 2020.	£21.60 (£3.60)
003007	Graham Dunkley Outdoor Services.	Notice board and fencing – invoice 02 fencing £790.50 Invoice 03 notice board £180.00	£970.50

Please contact the Clerk for a copy of the signed minutes.

003008	Ann North	Invoice for services to BPC December 2020	£100.00
DD	Waves	Water utilities	£88.00
DD	IONOS	Website April fees & 5-year Domain charge	£107.40 (17.90)

20. Rail freight terminals – the Chairman to update. The Chairman reported that he had attended a recent meeting also attended by Andrea Leadsom MP, and that proposals were discussed relating to planning gain via S106 funding to be allocated equally to five villages in two tranches backdated to January 2021 and the second tranche on completion of the first unit.

21. Planning & Development:

- a. Consider response for collaborative working with neighbouring parishes on Neighbourhood Plan. Deferred.
- b. Consider progress and response to the Housing Needs Survey for Blisworth. Deferred.
- c. Consider the following planning applications:

Application No	Location	Proposal
S/2021/0568/DCOR INFORMATION ONLY	NGRFI Land west of M1-J15	Requirement 8 Detailed design including various details re: Main Site landscaping, including fencing & other means of enclosure, and details relating to cycle and footpath routes and surfacing. Noted.
S/2020/0930/MAO APPEALS	Land South of Station Road Blisworth NN7 3DN	Outline Planning Application for up to 35 (max) residential dwellings --Matters Reserved Nothing further to add.
S/2021/0489/FUL	Buttermilk Hall Buttermilk Hall Farm Stoke Road Blisworth NN7 3DP	Variation of condition 2 (plans) of S/2019/0518/FUL (The demolition of an existing barn (with planning permission for residential conversion). No objection or observations.
S/2021/0556/FUL	4 Greenside Blisworth NN7 3BY	Single storey rear extension. No objection or observations.
WNS/2021/0050/FUL	4 Towcester Road Blisworth NN7 3BL	2 storey side and rear extension Objections and observations were discussed and agreed. The Chairman agreed to draft a letter to submit to the planning authority.

22. Street lighting – Cllr Bunker to report:

- a. Street lighting project update and residents' feedback. Cllr Bunker reported that the original project was completed however Western Power Distribution had disconnected streetlights not connected to the replacement streetlights by Zeta Lighting resulting in some streetlights being out. There has been some resident feedback about gaps in lighting between streetlights in Pond Bank and Greenaway Close.
- b. Approve additional work to the light at Arm Farm for £625 plus VAT. The Council discussed the recommendation for the addition works at Arm Farm, Cllr Bunker proposed the works, seconded by Cllr Hawkins and the Council **Resolved** to approve the works for £625 plus VAT to be undertaken by Zita Lighting.
- c. Consider a proposal to produce a plan to provide additional streetlights in Blisworth. Deferred.

23. Police & Neighbourhood Watch Scheme update from Cllr Read. Cllr Read circulated separately notes from the Police Liaison Representative Launch of the 22 April 2021 attended by both Cllrs Read and Wells. Both Councillors found the meeting interesting and of benefit and look forward to engaging with the local policing team on key issues impacting on Blisworth.

24. To consider the requirements by law involved to return to face-to-face Council meetings from 7 May 2021

- a. Agree actions to mitigate risks and protect face to face meeting attendees including updated risk assessment by the locations, maximum attendees, and safety measures. It was noted that the village hall was able to open from 17 May and booking would be taken from this date. The Village Hall has provision to undertake the risk assessments and safety controls necessary to support the reopening.

- b. Agree any additional requirements and budgetary issue arising including provision for hybrid/virtual meetings. Agreed that until the outcome of the legal challenge was known it was difficult to prepare for the next meeting other than it would be either public meeting, virtual meeting or possibly a hybrid meeting which would allow a small number of councillors and public with others allowed to participate virtually.
25. Water rates and recharges. Consider recommendations made by Clerk to recharge sub tenants and future arrangements to monitor water use. (Paper circulated prior to the meeting). The Clerk updated the Council on matters relating to the water meter and water meter charges. The water meter had required repairs as the soil around the meter had collapsed making it impossible to read the meter, Anglian Water had attended and carried out the remedial works and read the meter. Anglian Water recalculated the water charges, and the Clerk amended the recharges. The Council approved the recommendations of the report.
26. Village Maintenance & Open Spaces:
- a. Allotment:
 - i. Allotment update. The Clerk reported that Cllr Billing had carried out an inspection of the allotments and the Clerk had put together the allotment holders onto a spreadsheet and had produced an application form for those applying for an allotment.
 - ii. School Allotment update. Cllr Billing is progressing work to allocate a plot to the Primary School. The Clerk will be writing to the school in the next few weeks to include a tenancy agreement etc., for the school to complete before taking on the allotment plot for pupils.
 - b. Dog waste bins:
 - i. Note the Council's contractors, increase of £0.10p in the rate of dog waste bin collection. Noted.
 - ii. Consider residents request for a further dog waste bin following production of the updated asset register and location map. The Council discussed the need for an additional dog waste bin to be sited at the end of Connegar Leys and agreed a budget for supply and fitting new dog waste bin at a cost of no more than £300. Proposed by Cllr Read, seconded by Cllr Goss and the Council **Resolved** to approve the purchase of a new dog waste bin.
 - c. Play area.
 - i. Signage update - clerk to report. The Council agreed to seek the views of the inspector at the annual inspection to ensure the correct information etc., is included on a new sign.
 - ii. Monthly safety inspection report – Chairman to report. The Chairman reported that the cradle swing was showing evidence of wear and required attention. The Clerk was asked to contact Wicksteed Leisure to arrange for an urgent repair.
 - iii. Annual Play equipment safety inspection. The Clerk was asked to organise the annual play equipment safety inspection – accompanied, the Chairman would attend if available.
 - d. Street furniture:
 - i. Consider options for maintaining and replacing benches in the village. The Council discussed the maintenance of the existing benches and considered the requests from residents to provide memorial benches in the village. It was agreed that residents wishing to provide memorial benches should be offered the opportunity to replace worn out or benches beyond repair with the most appropriate material such as resin or composite benches which would offer a more cost effective and hard-wearing bench however for some locations a wooden bench may be preferable.
 - ii. Consider a response to individual requests from residents to site memorial benches in Blisworth. The Council discussed the most suitable location for memorial benches on land owned by the Parish Council – for other areas it would be necessary to contact the relevant authority or landowner. The bench outside the primary school requires replacing and this was considered a suitable place for a memorial bench for a local resident.
 - iii. Consider quotation for works to restore the bench in the play area and agree action and budget. Deferred to the May meeting.
27. Highways:
- a. Liaison with Highways. Nothing additional to report.

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b. Traffic Issues:

i. Speeding. The Council discussed the ongoing issues and the difficulties resolving the issue.

28. Canal & River Trust – consider the impact of canal visitors and boat users on Blisworth and agree ways to provide feedback to the Canal & River Trust. The Council discussed the issues raised and agreed that residents should make their views known via the Canal & River Trust website for leaving feedback and complaints:
<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-compliments-and-feedback>
29. Consider an application for a S137 Grant from Blisworth Friendship Group for £250.00. The Council approved the application for funding, proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Bunker and the Council **Resolved** to approve the grant for £250.00 to Blisworth Friendship Group to be paid upon receipt of a quotation or invoice for the coach trip.
30. Consider a request from the “Bring or Bag” Community Team for the Council to support the BT “Adopt a Kiosk” scheme. Councillors shared concerns regarding the potential ongoing costs and liabilities but agreed to defer a final decision until it had further information/feedback regarding these potential issues/costs.
31. Receive reports from councillors, present at the meeting. None.
32. Agree the arrangements including venue and date of the **Annual Parish Meeting at 7.00 pm** followed by the and the **Annual Meeting of the Parish Council** to be held on **Monday 17 May 2021 at 7.30 pm**.
33. Close. The meeting closed at 10.30 pm.

Appendix A

10. Correspondence from former Clerk in respect of banking issues during 2020. The Council to consider a response. (Correspondence circulated prior to the meeting).

The Chairman reported that, as the auditing process is about to commence, the Council had received correspondence from the Council's previous Clerk, who resigned her employment with the Council in December 2020. The correspondence, summarised at the meeting, set out the previous Clerk's view of what happened, including that the instructing letter from the Council to close both accounts and simply cash a cheque for the balance had been tampered with fraudulently. The Clerk outlined what was done to fully reinstate the funds and rectify some of the consequences before she left the Council's employment, for example, cheques cancelled while there were no funds in the account and the list of signatories had been deleted by the Bank which prevented us from paying suppliers. Furthermore, the Chairman reported that after acting on the Council's official instructing letter, the Bank's Fraud and Chargeback Operations department investigated the incident when the Council made a complaint. The Bank found a slight difference in signatures, brought the matter to the attention of a member of staff so that it would not reoccur in the future, apologised for not delivering excellent customer service and closed the complaint. The conclusion and admission by the bank following their investigation does not acknowledge that the original letter to close the account had been tampered with.