

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SILSOE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY 2016.**

Present: Cllr. J M Jarrard – in the Chair.

Cllrs. Mrs. H Flack, J G Foolkes, I J Kelly, P Kevan, L Mann, E Owen and R Vass.

Central Bedfordshire Cllr. Ms. A Graham, Mr J Robinson (Silsoe Community Recreational Trust), Mr D Swain (the Council's Solicitor) and three residents were also present.

### **124/15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No issues were raised by residents.

### **125/15 MINUTES**

Further to Minute 109/15, the Clerk reported that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18 November 2015 had been confirmed (without alteration) as a correct record. The Council considered the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16 December 2015 and requested that alterations be made to take account of Members' comments.

### **126/15 CO-OPTION TO FILL VACANCIES**

Further to Minute 110/15, the Chairman welcomed Mrs J McGrory and Mrs A Webb and reported that they had confirmed their interest in being co-opted to fill the two vacant 'seats'.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That, subject to completion of the formalities, Mrs J McGrory (of Plantation View) and Mrs A Webb (of Elm Drive) be co-opted to serve as Members of the Parish Council until the Elections in 2019.

(Note – The Clerk provided copies of the relevant documents for completion, and Mrs McGrory and Mrs Webb were invited to 'sit in' on the remainder of the meeting. A review of appointments / allocation of responsibilities was deferred to a future meeting.)

### **127/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no new declarations of interest.

### **128/15 POLICE ISSUES**

The Clerk referred to the crime statistics, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, and the Council noted that there had been four recorded crimes in the past month.

### **129/15 REPORT BY CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE CLLR. MS. A GRAHAM**

Further to Minutes 113/15 and 114/15, Cllr. Ms. A Graham reported that, as a result of archaeological excavations taking place at the rear of 16 – 36 Newbury Lane, the Case Officer had delayed his recommendation on planning application CB/15/03172. The Council noted an objection which a resident had sent to Central Bedfordshire Council,

and Cllr. Ms. Graham provided further information about the need to identify a five year supply of house-building land and progress a new Local Plan as a matter of priority. Members accepted that the Council's Parish Plan had no validity as a planning policy document and that there would be merit in producing a Neighbourhood Plan. Concerns were expressed about the lengthy procedure and costs involved, and Cllr. Ms. Graham referred to the possibility of new 'community led plans' being introduced.

Cllr. Ms. Graham also confirmed that, due to reductions in Government funding, Central Bedfordshire Council would have to consider a 2% increase in Council Tax in 2016/17 (in addition to the 2% allowed by the Government for Adult Social Care).

It was noted that Cllr. Ms. Graham was still seeking information from Central Bedfordshire Council about planning enforcement issues and the drainage problems in West End Road and adjacent to a new play area, which Miller Homes had recently transferred to the Parish Council.

### **130/15 PLANNING**

The Clerk reported receipt of three recent planning applications, and they were passed to the Planning Sub-Group for comment.

Further to Minute 114/15, the Clerk drew attention to correspondence about the 'Save the George' campaign, which had received positive support from residents. It was noted that the campaign intended to register as a Community Benefit Society, in order to notify Central Bedfordshire Council of the intention to bid for the George Hotel/Public House and turn it into a 'community hub' to meet Parish Plan objectives.

It was noted that Mr A Varley was investigating funding options and had enquired whether the Parish Council would be prepared to (a) consider a request for a grant or loan based on a sound business plan, (b) seek funding from the Public Works Loan Board, and (c) meet or contribute to the initial costs (570 pounds) of registering as a Community Benefit Society and joining the Plunkett Foundation (a Charity set up to support rural community projects). Members indicated support for the campaign but, having regard to the likely cost of the project, expressed concerns about the ability of the Parish Council to offer significant financial help. It was, however, agreed that the Council would make a grant of 570 pounds available to cover the costs referred to in (c) above.

### **131/15 UPDATES ON CURRENT PROJECTS**

#### **Silsoe Community Sports Centre and related community facilities.**

Further to Minute 115/15, representatives of the Sub Group and the Trust reported on the progress made in respect of the 'snagging list', fitting out the Centre, and drawing up a management contract with Stevenage Leisure. In relation to the contract, it was noted that the Centre was likely to be managed 'in tandem' with the new Flitwick Leisure Centre and Stevenage Leisure would be responsible for all staff (including volunteers). The Clerk confirmed that appropriate insurance arrangements were being progressed by Came & Company and a representative of Aviva Insurance had inspected the Centre on 13 January. He had noted the problem of surface water run off from the adjacent School site – which was to be resolved by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Mr D Swain reminded the Council that, as agreed by Central Bedfordshire Council (pursuant to the Section 106 Agreement), Bloor Homes had transferred the Centre to the Parish Council. It was now envisaged that, apart from insurance cover, the remaining responsibilities for the Centre should pass to Silsoe Community Recreational Trust; and the Trust would enter into the management contract with Stevenage Leisure. He

accordingly recommended that the Council should lease the Community Sports Centre and adjacent sports facilities to the Trust for 999 years.

**RESOLVED (Unanimously):**

That the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr. John Michael Jarrard, be authorised to execute on behalf of the Parish Council a 999 year Lease to Silsoe Community Recreational Trust (registered charity number 1162018) of the new Community Building and sports facilities recently acquired from Bloor Homes Ltd.

The Council noted that a scheduled payment of 65,000 pounds was due from Bloor Homes Ltd and agreed, in principle, to pay this sum to the Community Recreational Trust.

**Traffic Management Issues.**

Further to Minute 115/15, it was noted that representatives of the Council had met Central Bedfordshire Highways on 13 January to discuss the School Travel Plan and traffic management issues in the High Street.

The Chairman and Cllr. E Owen reported on likely improvements to walking routes to the new Lower School and referred, in particular, to the intention to open-up the fence between the Miller and Bloor developments, and to adopt/improve sections of Mander Farm Road.

The Council was pleased to note that representatives of Central Bedfordshire Highways were expected to attend the next meeting (17 February) to outline costed options for High Street improvements, in advance of public consultations in the Village Hall on Saturday 27 February.

**132/15 HIGHWAYS**

For the information of Members, the Clerk submitted copies of recent Customer Service and Roadworks Bulletins, together with a copy of Central Bedfordshire Highways Annual Report 2014/15. He also reminded the Council about the opportunity to bid for LTP Rural Match Funding for highway improvement schemes.

**133/15 FINANCE**

Further to Minute 118/15, the Clerk reported that Bedford Borough Council had offered to provide a payroll service for the Parish Council at a reasonable cost. It was intended to arrange a meeting to discuss workplace pensions etc. It was noted that NALC had recently issued a Legal Topic Note on Staff Pensions, together with information about external audit arrangements for 2017/18. Following the demise of the Audit Commission, a new Company (Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd) had been set-up to take over the appointment of external auditors and the setting of audit fees. However, legislation about audits for authorities with an annual turnover below 25,000 pounds was being clarified. Information had also been received from Department for Communities and Local Government about the local government finance settlement, and it was noted that the referendum principles would not apply to the parish sector in 2016/17. It had, however, been made clear that town and parish councils were expected to behave responsibly and protect their taxpayers from excessive precept increases.

The Clerk also reported on Bank balances, the affiliation fee for BATPC membership in 2016/17, and invoices for payment. Information about funding for green infrastructure projects was passed to Cllr. J Foolkes.  
Cllr. P Kevan submitted and commented on an updated budget statement.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the following payments be approved:

Came & Company – insurance premium for the Sports Centre	2309.48
Andy Muskett Ltd. – street lighting maintenance	133.92
CPM Playgrounds Ltd. – repairs to play equipment	474.00
DV Solicitors – professional charges and disbursements	1760.00
E.ON – energy charges	109.06
Clifford W and R C Shrimplin – advice on planning application	700.20

#### **134/15 CONSULTATIONS**

Further to Minute 119/15, the Chairman circulated copies of the public consultation document about the proposal to provide Post Office services from the Village Hall, and the Council indicated support.

Information about proposed increases in the 2016/17 budgets for both the Fire Service and the Police was noted.

#### **135/15 CORRESPONDENCE**

The Clerk submitted correspondence received since the last meeting, and drew attention to Central Bedfordshire's Cheering Volunteering Awards and the January issue of BATPC's Bedfordshire Bugle. Information about opportunities to celebrate HM the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in April 2016 was passed to the Chairman for consideration. It was noted that arrangements for local street parties had already been discussed.

#### **136/15 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Further to Minute 121/15, Cllr. I J Kelly provided further information about undertaking a Housing Needs Survey in the village. Members noted the intention of delivering a questionnaire to each household and suggested that savings could be made if it was available on-line. Concerns were expressed about the content of the questionnaire and Cllrs. Kelly and Mrs H Flack were asked to consider these issues.

#### **137/15 PLAY AREAS**

Cllr. L Mann reported on weekly inspections of the play areas and drew attention to the need to repair or replace a length of fence at the play area adjacent to The Fairways. It was agreed that costs should be obtained. The Clerk reported that new play equipment was due to be installed at the site in March/April.

#### **138/15 ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS**

In relation to items raised at the last meeting, it was noted that:

- The tree at The Grove appeared sound but the neighbour might benefit if it was trimmed/shaped to match an adjacent tree.
- The hedge at the allotments had been trimmed.
- Repairs to the bus shelter had been completed.

- Cllr. L Mann was awaiting a quotation from Harrold Signs for restoring the 'Festival of Britain' sign at Bedford Avenue.

The Clerk was asked to progress the order for a new noticeboard in Mander Farm Road. The Chairman reported that the Village Hall Management Committee had obtained quotations for new lighting in the Main Hall and improvements to the Bar/kitchen, and would be seeking a grant from the Council.

The Clerk confirmed that the next meeting of the Council would be held on Wednesday 17 February 2016.

**Chairman.**