

EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the East Brent Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Monday 7th January 2013 and commenced at 7.30pm, when the following business was transacted.

Present: Cllr V. Rawles, Cllr J. Bowden, Cllr A. Gilling, Cllr J. Webb, Cllr B. Woodward, Cllr W. Walker, Cllr Y. Roscorla, Cllr S. McGreavy, Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones, Cllr B. Bees and the Clerk to the Council, Mr Martin Shobbrook.

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr R. Filmer and the Chairman, Cllr E. Champion.

Cllr V. Rawles (Vice Chairperson) acted as Chairperson during the meeting and she invited members of the public to address the Committee, prior to the formal opening of the meeting.

Tracey and Doug Fletcher addressed the Committee on the matter of the planning application being made by Mr Mrs Isaacs under reference number 24/12/00023. In addition Mrs Susan Fowler spoke on the same matter. They collectively asked the Parish Council to continue to oppose the planning application on the grounds that the so-called amended plan submitted to S.D.C. was in no way different to the original one.

They said that if any other applicant had submitted such ill-prepared plans, S.D.C. would have immediately rejected them. They seemed to be making exceptions for these applicants and they did not consider this to be fair. Cllr A.Gilling responded that they all had the right to make their protests directly to S.D.C., in writing and by personally attending and addressing the Planning Committee, at S.D.C.

The Clerk advised them that the matter will be heard on the 15th January, at Bridgwater House. Cllr Rawles concluded this discussion by advising all that the Committee will be debating this issue later in the meeting under the Planning Applications section. She said that members of the public were welcome to stay and listen to that discussion.

Cllr Rawles then welcomed as guest speaker, Christine Stephens. She is the newly appointed Village Agent for this Parish. Ms Stephens explained that she was employed by the Community Council for Somerset under a Lottery Funded Scheme. Her role was to act as a point of contact between people in rural areas and the District Council. She had previously had 7 years experience with the C.A.B., and 11 years as a fund raiser with a charity. She outlined the areas she hoped to be able to assist "the end user" in the Villages she represents. These being, transport issues, problems of the elderly etc. She proposes having a "drop-in" session on the 8th March in conjunction with Brean and further details will follow.

Cllr Rawles thanked Christine Stephens for attending and she said she looked forward to a close working relationship developing between Ms Stephens and the Parish Council.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held at the Village Hall on 3rd December 2012, were signed as a true reflection of the business conducted by this Parish Council at that time.

ONGOING ISSUES

Minute 24/12: Defibrillator Equipment - Cllr Webb updated the Committee on the progress which she and Cllr S. McGreavy had made, regarding the supply of the equipment and the possible funding of it. She said that efforts to raise funds to pay for the equipment were progressing well. So far, she had obtained financial pledges amounting to approximately half of the costs of the scheme and she remained confident that the target date of the 1st March 2013 would be achieved. Several Committee members gave her suggestions of people / companies /

organisations to approach for funding and Cllr Webb will follow these up. She will report to the Committee again at the next meeting.

Minute 26/12: The Parish Council's Website - Cllr Walker updated the Committee on the progress of the Website. He said that all three portals (Parish / Community and History) were now "live" and the website is proving to be a useful means of communicating information to the public. He added that the formation of the website would not have been possible without the tremendous support and assistance given by Mr Ron Champion. Mr Champion has given his time and advice to the Parish Council, free of charge. In any other situation the costs of forming the website would have amounted to several thousands of pounds. He proposed that the Committee sends a letter of grateful appreciation to Mr Champion, thanking him for all that he has done. The Clerk will attend to this.

Minute 36/12: The return of records and equipment from the retiring Clerk. The new Clerk addressed the meeting on behalf of the absent Chairman and explained that both he and the Chairman had made contact with Mr Bob Strachan. Mr Strachan again apologises for the delay in returning these items. He says that he has had problems in Scotland (where he now lives) and he definitely intends visiting Somerset during the early-mid part of March when he will deliver all he still has. Cllr Bowden recommended that a formal invitation be sent to Mr Strachan inviting him to attend a Committee meeting, so that the proposed presentation of the retirement gift can be made at the same time as the return of the items. The new Clerk will attend to this.

Minute 40/12: The setting of the new Precept amount. Cllr N.Lloyd-Jones addressed the Committee and explained that he and the Clerk had worked on the preparation of the appropriate figures. He went through the prepared spread sheets showing the precept income and expenditure of the Parish Council during the last and current financial years. He highlighted the fixed costs and the expenditure of the Cemetery, including the two loans owing to the PWB. These 2 loans have a current value of some £33,800, but have a total repayment value of £42,500 (inc. interest charges) with the final repayment date being in April 2025. An example of a 2% increase in the precept was shown, this being an additional £350 on the existing £17,500 precept. It was highlighted that the need for a "reserve" fund to pay for any unforeseen or unexpected demands and referred to the recommendations of S.A.L.C. for this to be 75% of the annual budget for the Council. After a general discussion, it was proposed by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Gilling, that the Precept for the next year 2013/2014 should remain at the present rate. The Clerk was directed to convey this information to S.D.C., subject to taking its advice on the amount to retain in a "reserve" fund.

Addendum to this directive: Following the contact made by the Clerk with Tanya Mather, Corporate Accountant at S.D.C., it was decided to adjourn the setting of the Precept until the next Committee meeting and not to submit the Parish Council's Precept return to Sedgemoor District Council until after that meeting.

PLANNING MATTERS

The Committee was addressed by Cllr J. Webb regarding the four planning applications shown on the Agenda. She explained, that together with Cllrs. Y. Roscorla and B. Woodward, they had attended at the addresses of the first, second and fourth applications, on the 3rd January 2013. They were all of the opinion that none of the planning applications presented any reasons why they should not receive the support and approval of the Parish Council. All the applications complied with the particular directives which the Planning Sub-Committee scrutinise and Cllr Webb invited the Parish Council to recommend to S.D.C., the approval of each application. The application relating to 3 Johnson Close, East Brent was proposed by Cllr Woodward and seconded by Cllr Lloyd-Jones. The application relating to Pendene, Church Road, East Brent was proposed by Cllr Woodward and seconded by Cllr Roscorla. The application relating to East Brent First School, East Brent was proposed by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Webb.

The application by Southwestern Housing Society at Ashlawn Farm, Pill Road, Rooksbridge, had been discussed at a previous meeting and support for the application had been given then. The actual planning application had only been received by the Clerk on Saturday 5th January 2013 and therefore an inspection of the site had not been possible, nor is it considered to be necessary. The submitted plans were the same as had been produced to the Council during the meeting in November and it was unanimously agreed by all Councillors that the Council's continued support to the application should be given. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Webb and seconded by Cllr Roscorla.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Payment of the items listed on the Agenda was proposed by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Gilling.

Cheques for these amounts were then signed by Cllrs. Rawles and Gilling.

Cllr Bowden proposed that a donation of £15.00 is given to the Village Hall Committee to pay towards the electricity used to illuminate the Christmas Tree. This was seconded by Cllr Gilling.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones addressed the Committee on the suggestion that the Parish Council's bankers are changed from NatWest Bank Plc. to Unity Bank Plc and to using a single account. He highlighted the respect that Unity Bank was acquiring from numerous District and Parish Councils. The service given by Unity Bank to its customers was considered to be more efficient and professional than by bigger banks. He read a testimonial given by the Clerk of Brent Knoll and Wembdon Parishes, following the transfer of their banking arrangements to Unity Bank which was most positive. Cllr Bowden asked the Clerk for his opinion about this proposal, in his role of Chief Financial Officer for the Parish. The Clerk responded that he was in favour of a change of Bankers on the grounds outlined by Cllr Lloyd-Jones in his address. A further discussion followed and it was decided that another bank should be approached in order to make a comparison with Unity Bank Plc.

Cllr Gilling suggested that an approach should be made to Handelsbanken via their branch at Worle. Cllr Lloyd-Jones offered to contact that bank and maybe one other and will produce his findings on the comparisons of the banks at the next meeting.

MATTERS OF REPORT

Cllrs. Webb, Walker, Rawles, Lloyd-Jones, Bees, and the Clerk, had no matters to raise.

Cllr Gilling asked if any Councillor knew when Church Street at East Brent was re-named Church Road. Cllr Woodward said that she may be able to find this out from Jackie Collins.

Cllr Bowden wished to record his thanks to Cllrs. Walker, Bees and McGreavy for their help in setting up the Christmas Tree.

Cllr Roscorla wished to record her thanks to Cllrs. Walker, Lloyd-Jones and McGreavy for their help in connection with the flood relief work done by the Parish Council in the last few weeks. Cllr Woodward raised the fact that the traffic lights at the junction of Brent Road with Bridgwater Road are still partially obstructed by foliage and this is causing near accidents, to occur. The Clerk will contact the Highways dept. at S.C.C., to ask that this is attended to. At the same time, he will discuss the uneven curb at the entrance to the Village Hall, where an accident involving an overturned pushchair recently occurred.

Cllr McGreavy raised the recent incident where a cat had been seriously shot in its' eye by the use of an air-rifle. The heartless culprit has yet to be identified. He asked all Parishioners to be vigilant in looking out for the indiscriminate use of air-rifles in the Village.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, at 9.30pm.

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Monday 4th February 2013. at the Village Hall at 7.30pm, or earlier if a planning meeting is necessary.