

EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of East Brent Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Monday 7th April 2014 at 7.30pm, when the following business was transacted.

Present

Councillors; Cllr E. Champion,(Chairman) Cllr V. Rawles, Cllr A.Gilling, Cllr W. Walker, Cllr J. Bowden, Cllr B. Woodward, Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones, Cllr S. McGreavy, Cllr J. Webb, Cllr Y. Roscorla and Cllr B. Bees, together with the Clerk Mr M. Shobbrook.

Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies were received from Mr Bob Filmer.

A declaration of interest was made by Cllr Gilling in relation to the Planning matter on the Agenda (in view of his position on the Development Committee at SDC and in relation to the Planning application number 24/14/0007 by Brilliant Harvest Ltd. 007.

As there were many members of the public present who wished to speak on various planning matters, the Chairman allowed them to address the meeting and he brought forward these matters on the Agenda.

Initially, the Chairman allowed Mr Jeff Ingvaldson (the Chairman of Brilliant Harvest 009 Ltd.) to speak.

At this point, Cllr Gilling retired from the Hall, after declaring an interest in the land being the subject of this application.

Mr Ingvaldson told the meeting that his company has worked on several local sites to develop solar energy. His company has had numerous consultation meetings with Sedgemoor District Council and S.C.C to discuss all aspects of the present application. He emphasised that he feels very good about what his company does. He is proud of his company's record of producing environmentally clean electrical power and employing a large number of local workers. The Country is facing serious fuel problems and the generation of energy is a big concern. At the present time he says that there is a lack of a clear policy on energy production. The Country is losing 30% of its generating capacity. Solar energy farms have now been producing clean energy for between 50-60 years. His company has taken on board the concerns of local residents in this matter and lessons have been learned from that. He says he has tried to address all of these concerns and difficulties.

Mr Ingvaldson then answered questions from various Councillors.

Cllr Webb asked him about the traffic implications during the construction process. She said that Pill Road is very narrow and it cannot cope with the large volume of heavy vehicles which will need to travel along it. How long will the construction work take? Mr Ingvaldson replied, saying that estimating this was not an exact science. He thought it would be between 6-8 weeks, but during that time he thought measures would be put in place to minimise the interruption to local residents. His company would be working hand in hand with the Highways Department at S.C.C. Traffic lights will be installed and additional measures would be put in place to deal with "human error" usage of the road, during that time. All heavy vehicle lorry drivers who will be bringing equipment from Newhaven, will be English speaking.

Cllr Webb also asked about the life-span of the farm. She was told by Mr Ingvaldson that this was also an inexact science. Solar panels erected in Munich (Germany) in 1971 were still producing power with little degradation in output. The solar panels are able to sustain strikes from hailstones the size of golf balls.

Cllr Roscorla asked if consideration had been given to subsidence along the road and the area generally. She was told that it had and the ground structure was considered to be OK. She also asked whether the effect of wind on the site has been considered. She was told that it had and whilst the UK does sustain strong winds, these would not damage the installation of the solar panels as they will have strong anchorage into the ground.

Cllr McGreavy asked how deep the anchorage points would be. He was told that they would be 1.6 metres into the ground.

Cllr Walker asked about the number of heavy vehicle load which would be visiting the site. He said that in its' own report, the company states that there would be at least 73 lorry visits of which at least 40 would be large/heavy loads. Mr Ingvaldson replied that 14 tons would be the heaviest weight carried in one load.

Cllr Walker also asked how the company claims that the community will benefit from the solar farm. He was told that local people would be employed during the construction process and the company would make donations to local organisations to help them. The company was aware for example, that the Village was seeking another Defibrillator unit. Such a donation could be given if the approval for the site is given. Cllr Walker said that there had been very little, if any, notification of the consultation meeting in the immediate area and therefore the public were not fully aware of the planning application. Mr

Ingvaldson denied this and said that he had personally put up flyers in prominent places in the area, advising residents of this matter. Cllr Walker pursued this point and said that unless the Chairman of the Parish Council had specifically invited Mr Ingvaldson to attend this evening, no one from the company would have appeared. Mr Ingvaldson rejected this claim.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones asked what the likely impact of the solar farm would be when viewed from Brent Knoll. He said that he was aware that the height of the panels from the ground was approximately 5ft and that they would all face south. He asked what would be the predominant colour of the farm when viewed from above? Mr Ingvaldson together with Mr George Hall, showed various plans and representations of views to the Councillors.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones also asked about further development at the site. Is there going to be phase 2 and phase 3? Mr Ingvaldson replied by saying that there was definitely no plan to extend the site, as the transmission of power over the pylon network would be at its maximum capacity.

There being no further questions from the floor or from Councillors, the Chairman said that he would move on to the next planning matter.

He then referred to the planning application number 24/14/00006 being made by Mr Healey relating to "Venns Grove", Church Road, East Brent. As there were several members of the public present who wished to speak on this matter, he agreed to bring it forward on the Agenda for debate.

He allowed Mr Nigel Salmon who was representing the planning applicant, who is also the prospective purchaser of the property, to address the meeting.

Mr Salmon outlined the planning history of the property from 1989 to the present day and said that because St Mary's Church is a Grade 1 listed property, every careful attention to detail has been put into this present application. He said that when Mr Geoff Adams (who was present at the meeting) had bought the adjoining house ("Highfield") in 2010, he did so in the knowledge that a planning application to develop "Venns Grove", was already in existence. Further, Mr Adams was aware of various restrictive covenants imposed upon "Highfield" for the benefit of "Venns Grove". These included a denial of a right of light and view in perpetuity, together with rights for the owner of "Venns Grove" to enter upon "Highfield" (upon giving reasonable notice in advance) to undertake any repairs which might be necessary to the new proposed building. Mr Salmon then went through the plans for the proposed new building, giving exact details of measurements it would be from Mr Adams property and road. He claimed that any effects of overshadowing of Mr Adams property would be minimal and would only affect the front of "Highfield" which is not its prominent side. He emphasised that there is not an established building line in Church Road and the new building would not be a strident feature and in his opinion it would not impact too severely upon "Highfield".

The Chairman then allowed Mr Geoff Adams to address the meeting.

Mr Adams told the Committee that SDC had previously said that the new building would be 6 metres in front of the building line. The shared boundary he will have with "Venns Grove" will present problems and it will be very difficult to maintain the new building. The positioning of the proposed double garage at the front of the property could create drainage problems for surface rain water. He said that it was an inappropriate application for the Committee to support and he asked the Councillors to reject it.

There being no further questions from anyone about any planning matter, the Chairman declared the meeting to be formally open at 8.15pm. Cllr Gilling returned to the Hall.

The Chairman opened it with the planning matters, as they had attracted a lot of interest and it would enable members of the public who had only come to hear those being debated, to leave soon thereafter.

He invited Cllr McGreavy to advise the Committee regarding the applications before them tonight.

Cllr McGreavy said that he, Cllr Webb and Cllr Woodward had visited the sites.

In relation to application number 24/14/0004 ("Venns Grove", Church Road, East Brent), he said that he and his colleagues felt that the proposed building would seriously visually impact upon the neighbouring property and its light would be impaired. He said that they could not give their support to the application.

Cllr Woodward said that she was concerned about possible flooding problems resulting from the covering of such a large area of land and the inability of rainwater to drain away. This was echoed by Cllr Webb and she added that she felt the proposed development was too close to the house. Cllr Lloyd-Jones said that this was more of an issue to the applicant than the Parish Council, and the Council should only address the planning aspects of the application.

The Chairman interjected and asked if everyone present was of the opinion that the proposed development would create overshadowing, detrimental visual impact and drainage problems. The consensus was that it would create these. A proposal to reject the application was put forward by Cllr McGreavy and it was seconded by Cllr Woodward. A vote followed (during which Cllr Lloyd-Jones abstained) and by a majority, it was decided to reject the application. The Clerk was instructed to convey this to SDC in the usual way.

Cllr McGreavy then addressed application number 24/14/0004 "Coothorn Cottage", Rooksbridge Road, Rooksbridge. He said that he and Cllrs Webb and Woodward had visited the site. Presently, it has derelict buildings upon it, one of which will be demolished and replaced with a similar sized building. This will be used as holiday lets. After considering all the usual planning aspects the Council must address, he felt that this was an application the Council could support. Cllrs Webb and Woodward added that they felt the site would be improved by the proposed development and it would not create any parking issues. The Chairman asked for a proposal and Cllr Webb recommended that it should be supported. This was seconded by Cllr Bowden. A unanimous vote in favour then followed and the Clerk was instructed to convey this decision to SDC.

The Chairman then addressed planning application number 24/14/00007- land at "Ashlawn Farm", Pill Road, Rooksbridge - application for a solar farm by Brilliant Harvest 009 Ltd.

At this point Cllr Gilling again left the Hall after declaring an interest in the subject land.

The Chairman asked Cllr Walker to present the list of questions he would like to raise with the applicants. Cllr Walker then produced a list of questions which he said needed answering before the Parish Council would be able to decide upon this application. Mr Ingvaldson (who was still in attendance) took this list and said that either he or his assistant, Mr George Hall (also from Brilliant Harvest Ltd.) would answer all those questions in writing, within a week. A vigorous debate followed regarding various aspects of the application and the Chairman then said that, as it was apparent that the Committee was not able to evaluate all the aspects of this complex matter during this meeting, he would adjourn it and re-convene it again next week.

Cllr McGreavy said that the Parish Council must send its formal recommendation to SDC by the 19th April, and so a second meeting on Monday 14th April at 7.30pm, was agreed to take place.

The Chairman concluded by saying that as this is a major planning application, it must be treated appropriately.

The Clerk was instructed to convene a special meeting on the Council on this date.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on Monday 3rd March 2014, were signed by the Chairman as being a true reflection of the business carried out by this Parish Council on that date, following a proposal to that effect by Cllr Woodward. This was seconded by Cllr Rawles.

ONGOING ISSUES

Minute 04/13 : Review of the funding of the Parish Magazine- The Chairman said that immediately prior to attending the meeting, he had visited Molly Richards in order to hand over the PC's cheque for £500, being the latest donation towards the production costs. Whilst there he spoke about the continuance of the magazine publication. Mrs Richards had told him that she was making arrangements to outsource the printing of the magazine and making adjustments regarding the date of each publication, in an attempt to ensure that its release was in advance of the events it was advertising. The Chairman asked Mrs Richards to request any assistance she needed towards the production of the magazine, as he feels it is still a very worthy project for the community. He said he would not like to see the magazine cease being available. Mrs Richards confirmed her willingness to carry on running the magazine and dealing with the editorial aspects, using the outsource production option and the support from people to help with the delivery of it.

Cllr Rawles said that the March edition had not appeared and she is concerned to know if the April would be forthcoming. This comment was echoed by other Councillors. Many Councillors expressed their concerns about the advertising revenue being generated by the magazine, saying that they were aware of businesses which were keen to advertise in it, but they were unable to get the information they needed. A good income from advertising revenue is essential for the magazines continuance. The Chairman said he would re-visit Mrs Richards, to further understand how it's production is progressing and to discuss where assistance could be provided with any outstanding issues. Cllrs McGreavy, Webb, Rawles, Walker and Lloyd-Jones all agreed to assist where there could. The matter will be reviewed again during the next full Committee meeting.

Minute 24/12 : Defibrillator Equipment - Cllr Webb told the Committee that she and Cllr McGreavy had decided to make an executive decision on behalf of the Council in order to finalise the installation of the second Defibrillator unit. During the previous Committee meeting it had been suggested that the second unit should be sited at the surgery in Church Road. In view of the considerable difficulties Cllr Webb had encountered with the siting of the Defibrillator within the old telephone kiosk, this plan has been abandoned. Instead, it will be located on the external wall of the surgery, where the power connection will not be a problem and it will be a logical place to house the unit. It is hoped that by the time of the next full

Committee meeting, the unit will have been installed and it will be fully functioning. Cllr McGreavy will undertake the electrical connection needed.

Minute 30/12: The completion of the pavements adjacent to the building site at The Laurels, Old Bristol Road, East Brent - Cllr Gilling reported that no progress has been made in resolving this matter. He has pursued it with the Highways Department at S.C.C. They have so far, not been unable to contact the developer and in the absence of this, no progress has been made. A further report will be given if the situation changes.

Minute 03/13: The Horse Chestnut Trees on the "Village Green" - Cllr Lloyd-Jones informed the members that he has written to Ms Burton at SDC, about this matter and has asked her for dates when she would be available to come to East Brent, to discuss the matter at the site. Cllr Lloyd-Jones will notify those people who expressed an interest to join such a site meeting to see if some of them could make the agreed date.

Minute 08/13 : Playing Field Project at Pill Road, Rooksbridge - Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones updated the members on the various actions that have been taken this past month to progress this project. This includes the Clerk having reviewed the lease. There is one item relating to insurance that he will respond to Cllr Gilling's Solicitor about. Regarding insurance, a quote to cover potential equipment on the site to the value of £2,000, has been obtained and this will add less than £10 to the annual premium. The grant from the Nuttall Trust has been received and banked. A meeting took place with Phil Yorke of the Housing Society. He says they are pressing ahead and expect to complete the new housing and install the boundary fences, by the end of May. The PC needs to confirm the boundary line with Cllr Gilling, so that the Housing Society fencing contractor is clear as to where to install the fence at the site. They will open the existing panel fencing and lower the kerb, for easier access. With Martin Shobbrook's assistance a short licence document will be given to Mr Yorke to confirm access over a small strip of their land onto the proposed site. A meeting with Gary Bowden will take place on April 9th, to discuss preparing the area. It was mentioned that it's likely that allowing for the best amount of time for grass to grow that it's quite possible that the playing field may not be open for use until next spring. Cllr Gilling did raise the matter of having some form of removable bollard in order that unwanted vehicle access would be restricted to the site, a quote for the cost of such an item is to be obtained.

Minute 12/13: Community Warden Scheme - Cllr Gilling addressed the meeting and said that there has not been any progress in encouraging other Parish Councils to join the scheme, following the withdrawal of Brent Knoll PC. In order to succeed, the scheme requires at least four members. Currently there is only East Brent, West Huntspill and Puriton who are considering joining. It would appear therefore, that the scheme is likely to fail. If the situation changes, Cllr Gilling will advise the Committee.

Minute 14/13: Planning Appeal relating to the Pilrow Wind Farm - Cllr Walker addressed the meeting and advised that the latest reports had to be lodged with the Inspector by the 23rd April 2014 and that a decision by the Secretary of State, will be announced by the end of June. He also said that the West Huntspill wind farm appeal was being taken to the High Court.

Minute 3/14: East Brent's Membership of the Royal British Legion - Cllr Webb said that she has finally had a response to her 9 emails sent to Mr David Godsall, in which she requested information about this matter. Mr Robert McDonald has replied saying that he would be pleased to meet with Cllr Webb, in order to answer her questions. Cllr Webb felt that an invitation to Mr McDonald, inviting him to speak at the forthcoming Annual Parish Meeting would be a good idea. This was agreed by all and Cllr Webb will formally invite Mr McDonald to address the Parish meeting on Wednesday 23rd April at 7.30pm. Cllr Webb said that she has the names of 10 people who have expressed an interest in joining the British Legion's East Brent branch.

Minute 4/14: Submission of the Parish Council's VAT claim form to Inland Revenue - The Clerk told the Councillors that he has submitted a claim for a VAT refund totalling £590.24 for the previous financial year and as there is all the required documentation if necessary, he sees no reason why it will not be paid back to the Council.

Minute 5/14: Preparations for the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 23rd April - The Chairman re-iterated the decision made earlier, to invite Mr McDonald to speak at the meeting. He said that as the number of members of the public who will attend is uncertain, he did not want to "overkill" the number of speakers to be invited. It would be embarrassing for the Parish Council if several speakers were invited, only to find that the number of parishioners who attend, was disappointingly low.

Minute 6/14: Submission of the Annual Audit of Accounts to Grant Thornton & Co - The Clerk told the Committee that he has concluded the accounts for the financial year 2013-14 and these are now being verified by Cllr Lloyd-Jones in his capacity as Finance Officer for the Council. Once he has concluded that process, the accounts will be sent for internal auditing by Mr Graham Jarvis (the Clerk of Chilton Trinity PC) before being submitted to Messrs Grant Thornton for the external audit. The Clerk confirmed that he had complied with the requisite siting and presentation of all notices appertaining the Annual Audit.

Minute 7/14: Request for a repair cost donation by the Village Hall Management Committee -

The Chairman read out the email he had received from Mr Hugh Mackay dated 27th March 2014. In this email Mr Mackay asks the Parish Council to make a donation to the Village Hall Management Fund, to assist in the ongoing repair costs it is facing, for the Village Hall. As Financial Officer for the PC, Cllr Lloyd-Jones pointed out that the Village Hall Management group has taken on the responsibility of maintaining the Village Hall. This has alleviated the Parish Council of this responsibility and recognition of this should be given. The Village benefits greatly from having the asset of the Village Hall and rather than deal with individual requests from the management group on a regular basis; he suggests that the Parish Council could made an annual donation towards the upkeep costs.

Cllr Rawles agreed with this suggestion and she said that the Parish Council should set a figure it will give annually to the Village Hall. An amount of £400 per annum (payable in April) was suggested and this was proposed for adoption by Cllr Lloyd-Jones and seconded by Cllr Woodward. A unanimous vote in favour was then passed.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Clerk referred to the proposed payments listed on the Agenda. No questions were raised and a proposal for payment of them all was made by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Lloyd-Jones. A unanimous vote was carried by the whole Committee to pay these items and cheques were subsequently signed by the Chairman and Cllr Rawles.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones then addressed the Committee regarding the financial status of the Council and the budget for the next financial year. He said that the Council had slightly under-spent it on its 2013 to 2014 budget, this was in part as costs expected to fall within that year had not come through. He continued by saying that he still needed to review the final figures / latest bank statements and would give a fuller update at the next meeting. However, it was mentioned that the accounts are in good order and being closely monitored.

MATTERS OF REPORT

The Chairman mentioned the proposal to erect a bus shelter along Red House Road, East Brent. Funds might be available from the forthcoming year's financial budget of SDC to pay for this and it was agreed that the owners of properties immediately adjoining the proposed site should be consulted. The Parish Council will not take any part in this plan.

Cllr Walker gave an update on a footpath which crossed Mr Diamond's land. He said that a tree, which had fallen across a footpath gate in the recent high winds, had been reported and had been removed. He also reported that a new a gate had been fitted in a footpath which crossed Mark Woodward's land.

Cllr McGreavy said that Brilliant Harvest 009 Ltd. should remove the "flyers" they had put up around the Village advertising the then forthcoming (but now passed) meeting about the solar farm planning application. They appeared to have just been left without any regard for the tidiness of the Village.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones has been in contact with Dave Aggett at SDC re the poor condition of the goal posts and goal mouth areas in the playing field next to Red House Road. Mr Aggett has agreed that the goals need replacing and ground in front repaired/re-grassed. Mr Aggett made several suggestions, including if there should be only one goal. Members felt strongly that 2 goals should still be sited on that area. Also Mr Aggett highlighted that the PC have previously provided the goal nets, so that may need to be the case again. This seems to be reasonable, when all the other work required would be covered by SDC.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones will respond to Mr Aggett about how possible changes to the location of the goal posts and their replacement/repair, could take place sooner rather than later. This being an ideal time for grass seeding.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.45pm.

The next meeting of the East Brent Parish Council will be on Monday 14th April at 7.30pm to consider planning application number 24/14/00007 by Brilliant Harvest 009 Ltd. Followed by Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 23rd April 2014 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall.