

EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of East Brent Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Monday 1st December 2014 at 7.30pm, when the following business was transacted.

Present

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

1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies were received from Mr Bob Filmer and from Cllr J. Webb, Cllr B. Woodward and Cllr S. McGreavy

Cllr A. Gilling declared an interest in relation to all planning matters, in view of his position on the Development Committee at S.D.C.

Mr and Mrs D. Ellis of "The Elms" of Brentwood, Jarvis Lane East Brent, TA9 4HS were in the public section and the Chairperson decided to bring forward on the Agenda the planning matters listed, so that they could retire from the meeting once their planning application had been discussed.

The Clerk advised the Chairperson that he had received a telephone call from Cllr McGreavy (the PC's Planning Co-ordinator) during the afternoon, advising him that Cllr McGreavy would not be able to attend the meeting tonight. He therefore asked the Clerk to be his spokesperson regarding the two planning matters and to brief the full Committee with his thoughts and recommendations on these matters. Before any discussion commenced, Cllr Gilling temporarily withdrew from the meeting and Cllr Champion declared an interest in the land adjacent to the site.

On Cllr McGreavy's part the Clerk addressed the Committee and said that the first matter on the planning Agenda had been deferred. This was matter number 24/14/00023 Mr D. Harvey, South House, Lake House Lane, East Brent TA9 4HN. An email had been sent by District Councillor Mr Bob Filmer to Cllr McGreavy telling him that Sedgemoor District Council had withdrawn the application as it had been invalidated because further survey information is required. No action was therefore necessary by this Council for the time being.

The second planning matter on the Agenda related to an application by Mr Mrs D. Ellis of Brentwood, Jarvis Lane, East Brent TA9 4HS for change of use and conversion of outbuildings to 2 self-contained 1 bedroom holiday lets at their property. Cllrs McGreavy, Woodward and Bees had visited the site earlier during the day. Cllr McGreavy had read the Bat report being part of the application and it had confirmed that no bats had been observed at the site during any of the daytime and nighttimes checks. He and his fellow Councillors had not found any issues with the application which concerned them as the site is surrounded by fields and high hedges which during the summer months would completely shield the site from view. The application included the taking down of one barn which they thought would improve the general appearance at the site. Having reviewed all aspects of the application so far as they impacted on the Parish Council's involvement in the matter, he could see no reason why the PC could not fully support the application. He therefore recommended its approval. Cllr Bees proposed that the PC gave its full approval to the application and this was seconded by Cllr Bowden. A unanimous vote in favour then followed.

Cllr Gilling returned into the Hall.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on Monday 10th November 2014.

The Minutes of this meeting were signed by the Chairperson as being a true and accurate reflection of the business carried out by this Parish Council on that date.

3. Matters Arising:-

As it was necessary for Cllr Lloyd-Jones to withdraw from the meeting as soon as he could (having another appointment) the Chairperson brought forward all matters in which Cllr Lloyd-Jones was the principal speaker.

Minute 08/13 : Playing Field off Pill Road, Rooksbridge - Cllr Lloyd-Jones said that the only news he had regarding this matter was that having contacted Phil Yorke of the Housing Association, he had been told that the Highways Department were in the process of assessing the adoption of the roadway leading to the site and once the adoption was complete then they would look to lower the curb at the entrance to the playing field.

Minute 12/14 : Updating of the Playing Field adjoining Brent Road - Cllr Lloyd-Jones said that work on this area was still progressing, as SDC last week removed a diseased tree and cut back others and SDC staff would be returning soon to remove the tree stump and concrete next to it from a previous bench installation. Dave Aggett of SDC has said that he expects the 2 new benches (one being funded by the PC) will be in place before Christmas.

Whilst in contact with Mr Aggett, Cllr Lloyd-Jones has pointed out that a large broken off branch in one of the horse chestnut trees next to the phone box is hanging from a BT phone cable running through the tree and there is a concern it may cause issues for any houses linked to that particular phone cable and he has requested that it is removed by them.

On the matter of the PC's insurance policy with Came & Co. he said that the schedule of cover (totalling £142,000) has now been adjusted to better suit the various categories. The items owned by the PC has been adjusted to £22,000 and the War Memorial increased to £120,000 - as initial indications are that it could cost as much as that to fully repair if it was badly damaged and the offender had no insurance cover. All these alterations are still within the premium already paid for this year and no further action will be necessary until September 2015 when the policy next comes up for renewal. Cllr Lloyd-Jones also pointed out that the total cover also included elements of Public Liability and third party indemnity cover.

The Chairperson added that she is working to obtaining a written cost to rebuild the War Memorial, from Wells Cathedral Stonemasons and will look to try to obtain a second such quote, so that the insurance cover for the War Memorial can be fully addressed by next September with then trying to source the best insurance cover, even if that meant needing to change insurance companies. Ideally, the cover for the Memorial should be indexed linked to maintain the full replacement cost, if it was to be destroyed by completely by, for example an un-insured driver of a vehicle, striking it.

Minute 14/14: The setting of the Precept request for the next year, with SDC - Cllr Lloyd-Jones (as Finance Officer for the PC) addressed the Committee. He circulated copies of the Precept Budget figures he had prepared showing the expenditure on the main items dealt with by the PC during the year and projected amounts for the next financial year from April 2015. Overall an increase of 4.1% is indicated allowing for additional costs which were likely for the remuneration of the new Clerk (following Martin Shobbrook's retirement) in order to bring the Clerk's salary into line with the recommended salary levels. He also mentioned that 2015 was to be a General Election year and if there was a contested local election of Parish Council members, the PC could face costs of £1,500. It was hoped that the Village magazine production costs might be self-funded by advertising revenue received, once it has become established and may then not need to be subsidised by the PC. However at this time a contribution towards its production cost is within the budget.

Therefore there may be some extra expenditure which cannot be confirmed at this stage and so if more costs for items such as the aforementioned do arise then there are sufficient funds being held in the PC's bank account in reserve which can be used.

He told the Committee that the Precept request form has to be returned to SDC by the 9th January 2015 and so the setting of the Precept could be deferred until the January meeting of the PC if more time for its debate was felt to be necessary. The general consensus was that the topic had been sufficiently debated for a decision to be made during this meeting. Cllr Champion therefore proposed and Cllr Bowden seconded a motion suggesting that the Annual Precept request for the forthcoming year should be set at 4.1% higher than the current figure. A unanimous vote in favour followed and the Clerk was directed to complete the Precept request form being sent to SDC, accordingly.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones concluded his address by saying that under the heading of Matters of Report later in the meeting he wished to recommend that a Contingency Plan should be drawn up to cover how the PC would continue to operate if there was for any reason a long-term absence of its Clerk. He circulated a list of the principal tasks which would need to be undertaken and alongside each he had placed the name of Councillor(s) who maybe best suited to do that task, on a short-term basis. The list was accepted as a model which could be put into place if circumstances demanded it.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones retired from the meeting at 7.55pm.

Minute 24/12 : Defibrillator Equipment - In the absence of Cllr Webb it was agreed that this matter would be postponed until the next Committee meeting.

Minute 30/12 : Pavements adjacent to the building site at The Laurels, Old Bristol Road, East Brent - Cllr Walker updated the Committee by saying that he had been advised by Stuart Houlet of SDC that the District Council had decided to serve breach of planning notices on the builder within the next week. These notices required full compliance of the original planning consent within three months from the date of their service. The notices cannot be contested and there can be no appeal against them being implemented. Cllr Walker said that everything possible has therefore been done for the present and the matter will therefore have to wait until three months time to see what will happen next.

He will therefore report to the next Parish Council meeting in March 2015, if there is any news.

Minute 04/13 : Parish Magazine - Cllr Walker addressed the Committee (as Editor of the magazine) and said that the second edition of the Magazine (under new management) had been released. 600 copies had been printed and the production run had been successful. It was "on its way to paying for itself and being self sufficient". He has received a number of complimentary comments about the magazine and it has generally been well received throughout the Village. He said that he still welcomed any stories, information or articles from parishioners for future editions. Cllr Bees said that there had been problems in delivering the magazine on time to some areas of the Village. Cllr Walker said that one of the difficulties over this had been caused by the fact that during the handover from the previous organisers of the magazine, no lists of delivery areas had been provided. Hopefully this has now been addressed and every part of the Village will receive copies in the future. These "teething troubles" are perhaps to be expected.

Minute 15/14: Arrangement for the purchase of and the setting up of, the Village Christmas Tree. Cllr Bowden told the Committee that everything was in hand. The tree has been ordered and was being collected on Thursday. The tree lights have been handed to Cllr McGreavy for electrical safety testing and it will be erected and decorated on Thursday afternoon at 2.00pm. Together with his son Gary and Cllrs Bees and Walker the task was hoped to be finished and the tree illuminated, during the afternoon.

4. Financial Matters :

The Chairperson read out the list of proposed payments recorded on the Agenda and the supplemental Agenda and payment of all these items was proposed by Cllr Gilling and seconded by Cllr Walker. These were then passed unanimously by the Committee. Cheques for these payments were then signed by the Chairperson and Cllr Gilling. The Clerk will not release the cheques shown on the supplemental Agenda until Friday, in order to give Parishioners the opportunity to object to their payment. The Chairperson told the Committee that the members of the sub-committee set up to deal with the appointment of the new Clerk, had decided not to submit an advert in the local press until after Christmas and the New Year. They felt that the advert would be more successful if presented in January, as it is unlikely that people will be looking to apply for jobs over this period. For the moment therefore they had decided to only advertise the position in the official publication, the SLCC. This refers to the invoice for £108.00 on the first Agenda. The position has been advertised on the PC's own website and in the Village magazine.

5. Correspondence : None, other than has already been circulated to Councillors.

6. Matters of Report :

Cllr Gilling told the Committee that Brilliant Harvest Ltd. had confirmed to him that the Company was prepared to pay for the installation of a third Defibrillator in the Village when the Solar farm at Ash Lawn Farm, Pill Road was functioning. He also said that the state of the bus shelter at Mendip Road has been greatly improved following work being carried out by Clean Surrounds Dept. of SDC. to remove overgrown vegetation.

Cllr Bees said that following his raising of the issue of speeding motorists along Brent Road, during the September meeting of the Committee, he had contacted SCC at Taunton to enquire if S.I.D. lights could be installed along this stretch of road. He had been told by Mr George Hooper that an official application would need to be submitted by the PC for this. The Clerk was instructed to undertake these arrangements and he will contact Mr Liam Gill to do so. Cllr Bees also asked if the PC could help in the proposed scrapping of the bus service 102 to ensure that it remained. Cllr Gilling said that he was aware that District Councillor Bob Filmer was working on this task as it has been mentioned in Brent Knoll as well. It was agreed that individual Parishioners within the Village who might be affected by this proposed closure, should write letters of support for the bus service. A notice to this effect will be put on the PC's website.

Cllr Champion raised the very slow speed of Broadband in the area. He asked if anything could be done to improve it. Cllr Gilling handed a brochure he had recently received from the consortium of County Councils about this topic, to the Clerk and instructed him to contact Mr Andrew Melhuish of the Democratic Services at SDC to obtain as much information as he could about this.

Cllr Walker raised the question of VAT being charged on adverts placed in the Village magazine. He said he had been advised that VAT was not payable when the advertiser made a donation to the magazine instead of being sent an invoice for their advert. Cllr Gilling suggested that this could be checked by making contact with District Councillor Bob Filmer who has knowledge of such matters as he is the Editor of that magazine. Cllr Walker said that Brent Knoll's case was different from East Brent's in that it was our Council who actually ran the magazine. At Brent Knoll, it was separate from their Parish Council.

Cllr Gilling provided his mobile phone number (07720034112) to be added to the Councillors contact sheet which the Clerk had circulated during the meeting. He also said that at a recent meeting of the Coastal Cluster Group, RLT3 Fund awards were made to Burnham on Sea Cricket Club & YMCA Highbridge.

Finally, the Chairperson advised the Committee that she and her husband had collected bags of salt for use during icy weather from SDC. They were located at her property if needed. She also raised the question of salt being spread along Edingworth Road and Mendip Road during icy weather. She said she felt these roads should be added to the list of roads treated by the Highways Dept. as they are heavily used and they do become dangerous during low winter temperatures. She will enquire if this can be done. Regarding the appointment of a new Clerk to succeed Martin Shobbrook, she said she will keep the Committee informed of news. At present there cannot be a closing date/cut off period for applications, because there may be a need to advertise the position after the Christmas and New Year period. She said that one application, complete with a CV. had been received. Finally, she said there was to be new play equipment installed at Orchard Close for the benefit of local residents.

Cllr Roscorla was thanked for providing the members of the Committee and the two members of the public, with seasonal mince pies and teas and coffees.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

The next meeting of East Brent Parish Council will be held on Monday 5th January 2015 at 7.30pm, in East Brent Village Hall