

EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the East Brent Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Monday 3rd December 2012 and commenced at 7.30pm, when the following business was transacted.

Present: Cllr E. Champion, (Chairman) 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.

Minute 01/12: TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr R. Filmer.

The Chairman welcomed Mary Chorley, Phil Yorke and Matt Bollan who had attended the meeting to give the Committee an update on the proposed Affordable Housing, to be built at Rooksbridge.

Phil Yorke spoke first and he told the Committee that the Consultation with all interested Agencies had been concluded. The plan was to build both bungalows and houses to meet the needs of the community. The land is on flood zone two and as a result, the architects have incorporated mezzanine floors in the bungalows, providing bedroom accommodation at first floor level.

Mary Chorley told the Committee that in order to address all requests in the Consultation document, a small toddler's play area will be included on the site.

Matt Bollan produced the drawings he had prepared showing the location of the housing and the specific designs of the proposed houses and bungalows.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman asked for the time scale of the development and he was advised by Phil Yorke that the plans will be lodged with S.D.C. before Christmas 2012.

The usual 13 weeks consultation with planners will follow and it is hoped that building will start during April 2013. By then, parking issues should have been satisfied and it is expected that the building process will take about 40 weeks. The properties should be ready for occupation in early 2014.

There being no questions put to the representatives, the Chairman thanked them all for attending and giving the update.

Cllr Bowden added that the Housing Association had already proven its desire and intention to serve the local community very well and he welcomed the progress reports, which will no doubt come.

The Chairman then invited members of the public to address the Committee on topics.

Mrs Susan Fowler said that she was very concerned at the way S.D.C. were dealing with a planning application being made by Mr Mrs Isaacs under Planning application number 24/12/00023. She said that the relevant plans for this application had been changed at the last minute. She wanted assurances that the correct planning procedures were being adopted by S.D.C. which would give her and Mrs. Mary Cole, who also addressed the Committee, the correct facilities to make their representations to S.D.C., before a decision was reached. They both wanted to ensure that the Parish Council was being kept up to-date by S.D.C. and that the Parish Council would also have the chance to convey its comments on the revised plans.

The Clerk was instructed to immediately consult S.D.C. to find out when the matter was to be considered by the Planning Committee at S.D.C. and to ensure that all normal consultation processes were being implemented. He will advise both the Committee and Mrs. Fowler and Mrs. Cole of his findings.

Mr. Andrew Puddy addressed the Committee on the recent flooding of his own property, (the old butchers shop). He said that the problems at his property were caused by the drainage system (controlled by Wessex Water) blocking up and the massive accumulation of surface water running off the road (controlled by the Highways Authority). He asked if the Parish Council could assist in bringing all relevant bodies (including the local drainage board) together, in an attempt to avoid similar problem from re-occurring in the future.

At this point the Chairman declared an interest in that he is a member of the local Drainage Board. He said that, they are looking at two different schemes. The first is to take water away via rhynes out towards Lympham. The second is to stop Church Street from flooding, by diverting the water further up. Cllr Gilling added that the County Council is the key authority and responsibility lies with it.

The Drainage Board deal with fluvial matters and the Environment Agency deal with tidal matters.

The Chairman asked all in attendance to identify any specific ditches or rhynnes which need to be cleared.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones added that many culverts need to be checked for blockages, this was not being done frequently enough.

Cllr Walker said that we should take this episode of flooding as a severe warning and landowners should take responsibility themselves for areas where water then flows onto common land.

Cllr Gilling said that often, property owners put their own grass cuttings and other trimmings into ditches or rhynnes at the end of their gardens, which later cause blockages.

Cllr Woodward added that there are now more areas of concrete in the Parish, because of recent housing developments and the water can no longer penetrate through the soil and drain away.

Cllr Gilling said that the flooding in the last few weeks had highlighted the weak spots in the Parish.

Cllr Walker said that when he moved into his property originally, he was given a leaflet explaining "Riparian Rights". It is a useful booklet, which he will now post on the Parish Council's Website for the benefit of all parishioners.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones had prepared a schedule of proposed action to present to the meeting and using an overhead projector, he went through his proposals. These showed the "bigger picture" and included ideas for buying special equipment to be used in such emergencies.

He recommended the formation of a Sub-Committee to address all these points. This was proposed by Cllr Walker, and seconded by Cllr McGreavy. It would be chaired by Cllr Roscorla, who is the appointed Emergency Planning Officer, for the Council. Cllrs, Walker, McGreavy and Lloyd-Jones agreed to join the Sub-Committee.

This long debate ensued between members of the public and the Councillors and the Chairman eventually declared the formal meeting of the Committee open at 8.20pm.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held at the Village Hall on 5th November 2012, were signed as a true reflection of the business conducted by this Parish Council at that time.

ONGOING ISSUES

Minute 07/12: New Village Sign Following the adoption of the plans to include the wording "Home of Harvest Home" on the Village signs, made at the last Committee meeting; the Clerk was directed to contact S.C.C. and provide details of the chosen design. This will enable to manufacture of the new signs to commence. Further update of progress will be reported to the Committee when they are received.

Minute 16/12: Play Area Next to Village Green - The Clerk informed the Committee of his discussions with Harley Cook (SDC) regarding the replacement of the children's play equipment in this area. He said that it has now been established that the work is scheduled to be commenced during the next financial year. The second point which had been raised was the cutting of the grass at the play area. The Clerk read out the emails he had exchanged with S.D.C. over this, which stated that due to financial cutbacks and periods of very heavy rainfall, the Council had been forced to reduce the frequency of grass cutting. In answer to a question about removing the cut grass, Cllr Gilling said that this was the most expensive part of the process and is why cuttings are generally left to mulch and not taken away.

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 the total costs of implementing this project would have to be met by the Parish Council. Fundraising so far had been very successful; she said that in just three afternoons of canvassing, she had obtained financial pledges of over £300.00. A total of £3500.00 is needed by the 1st March 2013. She is confident that local businesses will be very supportive. The equipment will be located within the old telephone kiosk (which has been purchased by the Parish Council for £1.00, from B.T.) When members of the public ring the emergency services, they will be told of the location of the equipment and given the "code" needed to release the equipment from its anchorage and storage. This will hopefully prevent any theft or vandalism of the equipment. Cllr Webb will report to the next meeting of the Council.

Minute 26/12: The Parish Council's Website - Cllr Walker updated the Committee on the progress of the Website. He said that the History Portal was ready to go live tomorrow (4th December 2012). It is proposed that another portal will be added soon. This will be the "Health and Wellbeing" section. Local Gyms will be invited to advertise there.

The website is proving to be a useful means of communicating information to the public.

Minute 29/12: The Ownership of Common Open Spaces within the Parish of

East Brent - Cllr Walker advised the Committee that he had established that the land, upon which the War Memorial is built, belongs to S.C.C. The County Council would be prepared to give the land to the Parish. Cllr Bowden advised that the Parish Council was already responsible for cutting the grass on it. With regards to the "Village Green", opposite the playing fields area, Cllr Walker said that both the Land Registry and S.C.C. had no records of ownership of it. It was agreed that it could be acquired (by claiming possession of it and subsequently obtaining a Possessory Title to it, after a twelve year period). The Chairman said that this topic would be deferred until a point in the future. Cllr Walker invited Committee members to advise him of any other areas of land within the Parish, which they would like him to investigate the ownership of.

At this point in the meeting Cllr McGreavy had to leave the meeting because of severe back problems..

Minute 34/12: Preparation of a Code of Conduct for the Parish Council and Members...as directed by S.D.C. Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones addressed the Committee and succinctly preceded the action needed to comply with the outstanding directives of S.D.C.

These were; to adopt the Code of Conduct; return the Notices of Registrable Interest Forms to the Clerk and for all Committee members to sign the Request for Dispensation Form relating to the Precept. This was proposed by Cllr Walker and seconded by Cllr Woodward. Any outstanding forms from Committee members must be sent to the Clerk by post, so that he can lodge them with S.D.C. immediately. The Chairman again thanked Cllr Lloyd-Jones for all the hard work he had undertaken on behalf of the Council.

Minute 37/12 The emptying of Dog Bins at the Cemetery. The Clerk read to the Committee, the exchanges of emails with S.D.C. regarding this. Members of the Committee were sceptical about the actual number of visits made by S.D.C. in any month and directed the Clerk to ask S.D.C. if there is any way of monitoring or recording, the occasions when the bins are emptied. He will report back when further information is known.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Cllr Lloyd-Jones used the overhead projection system to go through the Accounts which he and the Clerk had worked upon. Each of the prepared spread-sheets was explained in detail and copies of them were made available for all Committee members to keep.

Questions were raised about the income and expenditure of the Jubilee celebrations earlier in the year and Cllr Lloyd-Jones and the Clerk agreed to further investigate the donations received. They will present final accounts to the Committee at the next meeting, so that a discussion can follow regarding possible expenditure plans to mark the event for prosperity. This would utilise any surplus money generated by the event.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones advised the Committee that they needed to discuss the setting of the Precept for the forthcoming year and this will be itemised on the Agenda for the January meeting. Before then, he will prepare the budget figures for the projected expenditure, during next year.

In addition he will prepare a presentation for discussion, about the concept of amalgamating the Council's bank accounts and possibly moving the accounts to the Unity Bank. Such action seems to be common amongst several local Parish Councils and also nationally.

The Clerk sought the approval of the Committee for payment of his salary for the months of October, November and December, together with payment of the usual out of pocket expenses during these months. Further, the costs incurred by Cllr Woodward in providing refreshments and mince pies during the meeting. Payment of these amounts was proposed by Cllr Walker and seconded by Cllr Rawles.

MATTERS OF REPORT

The Chairman

He advised the Committee that he had concluded the preparation of the response given to S.D.C. on the "Role of East Brent in the Sedgemoor Core Strategy". This had to be lodged before the 30th January 2013 and the outcome may be known by the 20th February 2013. He said that he will continue to resist any attempt to split East Brent from Rooksbridge.

Cllr A. Gilling

He asked the Clerk to find out more about the "Community Warden Scheme" and to report to the next Committee meeting in January.

He advised the Committee that he was aware of a £750,000 shortfall in the budgeting of financial matters by S.D.C. and that further cutbacks were likely.

Cllr Bowden

He reminded the Committee that it is customary for the Parish Council to purchase a box of biscuits for (Mrs Doar?) as a thank-you for her actions throughout the year in arranging for the Cemetery gates to be locked at night. He proposed that this should be repeated this Christmas. This was seconded by Cllr Woodward. Cllr Bowden advised that the Christmas Tree lights were not working and they should be replaced. It was agreed that Cllr McGreavy could purchase lights costing £30.00. He asked Committee members to assist with the decorating of the Parish Christmas Tree at the Village Hall on Saturday the 8th December at 2.30pm.

Cllr Woodward

She raised the fact that the "one way" signs outside the Village Hall, were becoming obscured by vegetation and this might lead to an accident. During the recent Polling for the Election of the Police Commissioner at the Village Hall, one voter nearly drove the wrong way along the road.

Cllr Walker

He mentioned the recent appointment of the Local Village Agent (Christine Stephens) and whether any information about this was available. The Clerk advised that he had spoken with her and she had asked if she could be allowed to address the full Committee at its next meeting in January. It was agreed that an invitation should be extended to her and the Clerk will make all necessary arrangements.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, at 10.10pm.

The next Parish Council meeting will be on Monday 7th January 2013. at the Village Hall at 7.30pm, or earlier if a planning meeting is necessary.