

EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the East Brent Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Monday 4th February 2013. It commenced at 7.30pm and the following business was transacted.

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr R. Filmer, Cllrs B. Woodward and S. McGeavy.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held at the Village Hall on 7th January 2013, were signed as a true reflection of the business conducted by this Parish Council at that time; after attributing the raising of road works issues at Hill Lane, to Cllr B. Bees and adding his name to the list of people being thanked by Cllr J. Bowden, in connection with the erection of the Village Christmas tree in December 2012.

ONGOING ISSUES

Minute 38/12: Flooding in the Parish. The Chairman opened this topic by saying that he had spoken with the Drainage Board regarding the issues and concerns felt by Parishioners and he had made their views known to the Board. These mainly related to Burton Row and to Church Street. Arising from this, there is going to be co-operation between the various Parish Councils affected and the Drainage Board, which will lead to plans being put in place to deal with flooding in the future. One of the plans is to dig a new drainage channel to take water away from the Village and the other was to divert water coming off the hill. The later plan was both more complicated and expensive. Cllrs Walker and Lloyd-Jones then addressed the meeting. Cllr Walker suggested that the Parish Council pays to have the 'stilling pond' cleared in Rectory Close and appoint someone to do this. The Chairman responded, saying that this would need to be a regular event, not just once each year and it would be difficult to fund and organise. Cllr Walker said that the emergency sub-committee (Cllrs Roscorla, McGeavy, Walker and Lloyd-Jones) had met and had formulated an action plan. He circulated the Flood follow-up sheet prepared by Cllr Lloyd-Jones and each item on it, was discussed. Cllr Gilling said that historically, landowners had been responsible to clear rhyes adjoining their property. The two rhyes in question here, have not been adopted by the Drainage Board, but they have nevertheless been cleared by the Board. Such attention has not been sufficient to avoid blockages. Cllr Walker said that he has a meeting set up with the Board, when they will walk around the Village inspecting the problem areas. He recommended that sand bags are sourced and stored in a shed (possibly in the Cemetery grounds) for use in emergencies. Cllr Bowden added that there were several local farmers who would probably be prepared to help in moving sand bags to flooded areas, using their tractors. The Chairman said that a team should be assembled to tackle flooding problems. Cllr Rawles said that the Parish was fortunate to have many businesses within its boundary and these could be asked to sponsor the cost of purchasing equipment, to assist the affected Parishioners. A community spirit needs to be engendered. Cllr Lloyd-Jones said that he had spoken with four local residents who would be prepared to assist in emergency conditions, using privately owned pumps and other equipment. The debate concluded with the sub-committee agreeing to meet with the Drainage Board and report back to the full Committee at the next scheduled meeting, producing details of figures and costings of the necessary equipment. Also, a plea for helpers and donations should be placed in the Parish magazine.

Minute 24/12: Defibrillator Equipment. -Cllr Webb updated the Committee on the progress which she has made. She said that efforts to raise funds to pay for the equipment were progressing well. She asked if fellow Councillors could join her on Wednesday 6th February at

2.30pm to receive a donation cheque for £450.00 from the Housing Association. She will report to the Committee again at the next meeting.

Minute 40/12: Setting of 2013/2014 Precept. Cllr N.Lloyd-Jones addressed the Committee and explained that he and the Clerk had worked on the preparation of the budget figures for the next financial year. They had attended a meeting of representatives from Parish Councils at S.D.C. on the 28th January 2013. During that meeting, the District Finance Officers gave advice and relevant information about the setting of each of the Parish Council's precepts. Cllr Lloyd-Jones went through the prepared spread sheets showing the precept income and expenditure of this Council during the last and current financial years. He highlighted the fixed costs remaining during the last two months of the financial year and the projected expenditure for the forthcoming financial year. He then went through in detail, the four options being offered by S.D.C. when setting the precept.

Cllr J. Bowden proposed the adoption of Option "A" and this was seconded by Cllr B. Bees.

Cllr J. Webb proposed the adoption of Option "B" and Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones proposed the adoption of Option "C" this was seconded by Cllr. W. Walker. As there was no outright majority in favour of any of the Options, the Chairman directed that a vote should be cast for each Option. Voting for Options "A", "B" and "C" then followed; with three votes in favour of Option "A", one vote in favour of Option "B" and five votes being cast for Option "C". The Chairman therefore declared that Option "C" was passed and he instructed the Clerk to submit a return to S.D.C. requesting a precept of £17,695 for the forthcoming financial year.

Minute 07/12: New Village signs. The Clerk addressed the meeting and said that he had contacted S.C.C. to find out the exact details about the replacement of the two village signs. He had been told that the signs were due to be replaced within the next two years under a normal renewal schedule. If they were replaced, with like for like signs, then this would not involve the Parish Council in any expense. If they were replaced with the proposed new signs bearing the logo, "Home of Harvest Home", this would cost the Parish £300.00 for both signs and all other costs would be borne by S.C.C. These new signs would be 1.5mtrs wide and 1.4mtrs high. A proposal to proceed with replacing the signs with new ones bearing the logo was made by Cllr Rawles and seconded by Cllr Webb. The Clerk was instructed to confirm the necessary arrangements with S.C.C.

Minute 01/13: Proposal to change the P.C.'s bankers. Cllr Lloyd-Jones had been asked at the previous meeting, to approach Handelsbanken and obtain details of the costs/benefits etc. of moving the accounts from NatWest Bank.

This was intended to provide a comparison between Unity Bank and at least one other non main High Street bank, if the Council decided to change its bankers. Cllr Lloyd-Jones explained that he had made contact with Mr Ben Emms at Handelsbanken. Mr Emms had advised Cllr Lloyd-Jones that Handelsbanken was not particularly suited for accounts such as that of the Parish Council. Charges of at least £20.00 per month would be levied in order to cover the bank's costs. This factor alone, made the transition to Handelsbanken, unsuitable. Cllr Lloyd-Jones then distributed the testimonial provided by Owen Cullwick, appertaining to Unity Bank, in which he states his Parish Councils (Wembdon and Brent Knoll) are very satisfied with Unity Bank. These accounts had been moved last year from NatWest, who had provided an "appalling service". Cllr Lloyd-Jones further explained that throughout the country over 130 Parish Councils now have their accounts with Unity Bank, together with 10 large Local Authorities, as they specialise in this area.

The Chairman then asked the Clerk for his views on the proposed change and in particular whether he had encountered any problems with NatWest Bank. The Clerk responded that he had not had any major problems during the time he has been in office, other than the bank charges incurred when two cheques issued by the previous Clerk had "bounced," due to the fact that a transfer of sufficient funds from the reserve account to the current account had not been made. He added that the attitude of the staff at both Burnham on Sea and Bridgwater branches of NatWest Bank, could be more helpful, to say the very least.

Cllr Bowden recommended that the Parish Council continues to maintain two separate accounts for the Cemetery and the General matters.

Cllr Rawles suggested that the need to maintain the reserve account had diminished, because the amount of interest being earned within it, was minimal. She recommended that the reserve account should be merged with the current account and this would alleviate the problem of "going overdrawn," in the future.

Cllr Bowden proposed that the account should be kept with NatWest Bank for a further period of about a year to see how things develop, but it could be reconsidered within that time scale, if the Clerk experienced problems with NatWest Bank. This was seconded by Cllr Gilling.

Another proposal was raised by Cllr Lloyd-Jones that the account should be moved now to Unity Bank. As there were two proposals placed before the Committee, the Chairman asked Councillors to vote on each. The proposal to remain at this time with NatWest received the majority of 6 votes. Therefore, the Chairman declared that the bank accounts should therefore continue to be maintained at NatWest Bank, but that the reserve account should be merged with the current account. The Cemetery account will continue to be separate from the current account. The Clerk was directed to make the appropriate arrangements with NatWest Bank.

PLANNING MATTERS: details of the decisions made by S.D.C. on previous applications were read out by the Chairman. No new applications had been received to date.

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 the Chairman and Cllr Rawles.

MATTERS OF REPORT

The Chairman raised the broken manhole cover on the pavement opposite the doctor's surgery and the repairs needed. He was updated by several Councillors who advised him that during that day BT had already been attending to the problem.

Another matter raised by the Chairman was the email received from the Highways dept. at S.C.C. concerning the installation of the V.A.S. system at Rooksbridge. A resident of a house adjacent to one of the signs has raised concerns on the siting of the post which he feels may impact on his ability to replenish his gas tank and its maintenance.

Several Councillors said that they had visited the site (having received copies of the relevant emails from the Clerk, last week) and they considered that the resident did not have a particular problem. As the Highways dept. had said that they would be prepared to temporarily remove the signs if there was an issue, the opinion of the Committee was that it should support the Highways dept. The Clerk was instructed to convey this to the Highways dept., but he must add that reliance is being placed on the promise to co-operate with the resident in the future, if an issue arose with him gaining access to his property.

Cllr Gilling advised the Committee that there would be a need for a planning application to be made in respect of the change of use of land belonging to him, which he intends leasing to the SouthWestern Housing Association, at Rooksbridge. He will need to withdraw from the discussion when it comes before the Committee, but he thought that money to pay for the cost of the application might be available from the L.T.2 funds. It was agreed that the matter should be included on next month's agenda for discussion.

Cllr Walker advised the Committee of the "hits" being made to the P.C.'s website. So far 4895 connections have been made, which averages at between 20-30 each day. The website is proving to be a very popular source of information for Parishioners. He also advised Councillors of a meeting to take place at Burnham on Sea to discuss the "Wind farm" appeal.

Cllr Woodward (through notes she passed to the Clerk) raised the following matters:-

The trees overgrowing the telephone kiosk,--requesting an up date.

The use of the Village Hall, she asks Councillors to think of ways that the hall can be hired out to raise more funds, as the income from lettings is down.

The dangerous usage by motorists, of the road outside the Village Hall,--drivers are still going the wrong way along it to gain access on to the A370. She has spoken to Pauline Dixon about this and she is contacting Chris Betty at S.C.C. to see what action can be taken.

She also wished to up-date the Committee with news from the Police. Reference the shooting of a cat recently, no more information has been found and sadly, the case has been closed. The Police also reported one burglary in East Brent recently.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones reported that the road repairs required in Brent Road have been attended to and the one on Hill Lane (by the cemetery entrance) will be done within a month. S.D.C. has now completed the cleaning of the large ground mats of the play equipment, adjacent to the Village Green. He also updated the Committee that the decision of the District Council, to the requests made by the Parish Council regarding its status under the Local Development Framework, was due to be made known on the 28th February.

Cllr Lloyd-Jones also referred to an email from Molly Richards concerning the Magazine, in which Mrs Richards provides an update on the advertising income and the potential gap in the funds required for a full year's production. Cllr Lloyd-Jones will follow up the accounting figures with Mrs Richards, since if the Parish Council continues to partly fund the magazine, as in previous years, then it will require details of the magazines income and costs.

Cllr Webb asked if S.C.C. have responded to a request for information about the car parking problems outside the Methodist Church. The Clerk advised that nothing has been reported to him. He will communicate with the Highways dept. to chase it.

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

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