

EAST BRENT PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of East Brent Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Monday 10th November 2014 at 7.30pm, when the following business was transacted.

Present

Councillors:- Cllr V. Rawles (Chairperson), Cllr J. Webb (Vice Chairperson), Cllr W. Walker, Cllr J. Bowden, Cllr A. Gilling, Cllr Y. Roscorla, Cllr B. Woodward, Cllr S. McGreavy 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 E. Champion and Cllr N. Lloyd-Jones. 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 Ellis of "The Elms", Weston Road, East Brent, TA9 4JE asked the Chairperson for permission to address the Committee. He said that he wished to raise the issue of speed limits and the enforcement of them by the Police along the main road through the village. Two weeks ago his daughter was involved in a bad car accident which occurred outside his house. Her car was hit from behind by another vehicle and it was declared "a write-off". Fortunately, his daughter was not seriously injured. The Police have subsequently positioned a mobile speed radar vehicle at the spot to deter speeding motorists. A small number of drivers have been prosecuted for speeding at the scene. The fatal accident which occurred a few years ago at Rooksbridge and led to the setting up of the "lights for life" group, was mentioned. The installation of the speed awareness lights at Rooksbridge has led to a reduction in the numbers of motorists speeding through this particular stretch of road. It was pointed out that soon, the speed cameras which still remain in positions throughout Somerset, will be switched back on and speeding motorists will once again be prosecuted. Mr Ellis was invited to write an article about his daughter's accident and to submit it to the Village magazine for publication.

The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 7.45pm. She invited the guest speaker Mrs Kim Wilcox, to address the meeting. Mrs Wilcox told the Committee that she had been appointed as Village Agent for East Brent, Brent Knoll, Berrow, Brean, Lympsham and Burnham without approximately seven months ago. She lives in Brent Knoll and works eight hours each week on her Village Agent matters. She has already found that this is not long enough to complete all of her tasks and she hopes to be able to increase her working week. She is employed by the Community Council for Somerset, which is funded from Lottery money. Her head office is based in Taunton. There are currently eighteen Village Agents appointed in Somerset and the scheme they all work under was originally devised in Gloucestershire where they have over thirty Village Agents. She has attended many meetings and she has met many local residents who have come to her requesting her help and assistance in various ways. She gave examples of the various ways she has been able to assist residents with their particular problems and she mentioned a number of organisations and groups with whom she works closely to assist elderly people in particular. She made particular mention of the liaison her office has with the Fire Brigade, who offer free advice and smoke alarms to elderly people who need assistance. Another example of the support and help she is able to arrange, concerns the "slinky bus service". Elderly people who have hospital appointments or who need transport to attend meetings, can book transport two weeks in advance. Having finished her address, she was asked by Cllr Web if there was a news sheet issued by her office. If so, then it could be printed in East Brent's Village magazine for the benefit of all. Mrs Wilcox said that she would provide Cllr Walker (the Editor of the Village magazine) with such information.

The Chairperson thanked Mrs Wilcox for attending and giving the Committee details of the work of the Village Agent.

2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting on Monday 6th October 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:-

Minute 30/12 : Pavements adjacent to the building site at The Laurels, Old Bristol Road, East Brent - Cllr Walker updated the Committee following the meeting arranged with Stuart

Houlet (SDC), himself and Cllr Rawles and District Cllr Bob Filmer. He read out a detailed email he had received from Mr Houlet, dated 15th October 2014. Mr Houlet says in this email that SDC will now take enforcement proceedings against the original developer for several breaches of the planning consents given to him. Initially, the developer will be served with a Breach of Condition Notice and this will be followed up by appropriate further action thereafter. For the moment therefore, the Parish Council cannot do anything else to advance this situation and it will have to rely upon the action being taken by both SDC and SCC, against the developer. He will therefore report to the next Parish Council meeting in December, if there is any news.

Minute 04/13 : Parish Magazine - Cllr Webb told the Committee that everyone was very positive about the first edition of the new magazine, which has been published recently. Advertising sales for future editions were going well and the predicted income currently stood at £897.00, which provided a definite income of £227.00 per edition (Dec/Jan, Feb and Mar); the financial support required from the Parish Council will be a maximum of £150.00 per edition. Cllr Webb was confident that the magazine will be self funding from advertising income from April onwards. Various new names were offered by the Councillors and these will be pursued by Cllr Webb. Cllr Walker asked if the PC was prepared to continue to support the production costs of the new magazine. A debate followed and ended with a proposal being made by Cllr Bowden and seconded by Cllr Roscorla, that the funding should continue as before. A unanimous vote to this effect was then carried. The Chairperson raised the issue of whether the PC should charge VAT on the fees to advertise in the magazine. The consensus was that the PC was not liable to collect VAT. Cllr Walker agreed to check this by contacting the PC's auditors and SALC in Taunton. Cllr Webb ended her report by saying that the next edition of the magazine will be out with householders by the 1st December 2014. A further report will be given during the next meeting in December.

Minute 24/12 : Defibrillator Equipment - Cllr Webb told the Committee that the proposed opening ceremony (scheduled for the 11th November), has had to be postponed. A leak around the wall mounted equipment has been found and this will be remedied as quickly as possible. Cllr McGreavy will attend to this. Ideally, the unit will need a roof constructed over it to protect it from rainwater. Efforts will be made to try to find a carpenter in the Village who will be prepared to make the cover using timber supplied and paid for by the PC. Cllr Gilling suggested a person who might be able to help and Cllr Webb will follow this up. The expected (and promised) donation of £1500 from funds via District Councillor John Denbee, should be paid to the PC before the end of the present financial year. He has contacted Cllr Webb to advise her of this. Cllr McGreavy told the Committee that the Doctors have asked that the posts supporting the Defibrillator unit at the surgery, should be painted black to conform with other decor there. Cllr Bowden offered to undertake this when he could. Cllr Bowden will undertake the staining of the wooden supports for the Defibrillator unit at the surgery. A new date will be set for the official opening of the units as soon as everything is finalised.

Minute 08/13 : Playing Field off Pill Road, Rooksbridge - As Cllr Lloyd-Jones was unable to attend this meeting, it was agreed that the matter will be postponed until the December meeting, when he will be able to update the Committee. Cllr Gilling said that a local resident has offered to become a key holder for the playing fields site, if this became necessary.

Minute 12/14 : Updating of the Playing Field adjoining Brent Road - This matter was also postponed until the December meeting to enable Cllr Lloyd-Jones to report. It was known that the benches have arrived at SDC, but a date for their installation at the playing fields has not yet been finalised.

Minute 13/14: Risk Assessment provisions, as detailed by the Internal Auditor in his annual audit report. Cllr Lloyd-Jones had told the Chairperson in an email he had sent to her within the last two days, that he had received a reply from the Monitoring Officer at SDC saying that she was unable to make any useful comments upon the Risk Management Report he has prepared. This had followed a recommendation to this effect being made by Cllr Gilling during the September meeting. It was agreed by all that the PC had done all it could do about this, in the light of the Auditor's comments in his annual report.

Minute 14/14: The setting of the Precept request for the next year, with SDC. In the absence of Cllr Lloyd-Jones from the meeting, the Chairperson advised the Committee of the notes he had given to her regarding this matter. Cllr Lloyd-Jones had said that he was working on the budget figures, including the question of charging VAT on the magazine adverts and the revised budget costs on the

Clerk's costs. All these topics will therefore be debated in full during the December meeting and a Precept request figure will be decided upon.

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 was being purchased and it will be collected on either the 4th or 5th of December. By the time of the December meeting of the PC, (1st December) a date for erecting and decorating the tree, will be known and Cllr Bowden will be able to advise everyone about this. He will provide the equipment needed to safely decorate the tree, in conjunction with his son Gary Bowden.

Minute 16/14: The possible re-siting of the venue of the Village Fete in 2015. Cllr McGreavy told the Committee that he has contacted SDC to find out the costs involved in holding the Fete on the Council's land rather than on the Church's land. If the booking was made by the Parish Council directly with SDC, then a reduced charge rate would be given. This would be £20.00 to hire the land and £20.00 for the special insurance policy needed for third party liability cover. As this would be much cheaper than the costs the Church would incur, it would mean that the event could be financially more viable and it would enable the event to be staged on the Village Green. A proposal that the PC should underwrite the booking fees was then made by Cllr McGreavy and seconded by Cllr Woodward. This was passed unanimously by the whole Committee. The event will probably take place in June 2015 and an invoice for the fees will be prepared and sent to the PC for payment.

Minute 17/14: The possibility and viability of arranging a separate insurance policy to cover only the Village War Memorial, excluding it from the existing general policy. The Chairperson said that she has spoken with Wells Cathedral Stone Masons about the full replacement cost of the War Memorial in the event of its total destruction in an accident. She has been given an estimated figure of approximately £150,000 to rebuild the War Memorial. This is because it is a unique construction and it has no replicas locally, at least. The PC is committed to its present cover for insurance until September 2015 (having been given favourable terms to do so during the last annual review). Thereafter, it might prove to be cheaper to arrange a separate insurance policy purely for the War Memorial and remove it from the cover provided under the general provisions of the PC's policy with Aviva Insurance Co. In the meantime it was strongly felt by many of the Councillors that the present cover should be extended to show the full replacements cost to be at least £120,000, better still the figure of £150,000. The Chairperson agreed to continue to try to get special cover for the War Memorial alone and to obtain written quotes from two separate Stone Masons for the cost of replacing the War Memorial.

Whilst talking about the Memorial, it was generally agreed that the Remembrance Day Service held yesterday was very well attended. It was thought that this was due to the media emphasising the centenary of the out-break of WW1 in 1914. It was also noted that the cleaning-up work carried out by PGC Contracting Services to the whole area around the War Memorial had been done to a high standard.

Planning:

Planning application number 24/14/00034 relating to the land at the south of Mill Batch Farm Industrial Estate, East Brent was considered. Before any debate commenced about it, Cllr Gilling left the room and he took no part in the decision making process.

Cllr Webb told the Committee that she, together with Cllrs Walker and Woodward had visited the site earlier that afternoon. She outlined the nature of this application and reminded the Committee of its review of previous planning applications made for this site by Mr Mrs Collins. After answering several questions raised by fellow Councillors, Cllr Webb proposed that the Parish Council supported this application. She did so on the basis that it did not contain any aspects which were contrary to the planning procedures undertaken by the planning sub-committee of the PC and also that it would create new employment prospects in the area. An additional ten people were likely to be needed at the site if the planning application was granted. Her motion was seconded by Cllr Woodward. Cllr Bowden said that he was prepared to follow the recommendation of the planning sub-committee and a unanimous vote in favour was passed by the whole committee. The Committee felt that some recommendations should be made by the Clerk when he sends the official return form to SDC. These included a request that consideration should be made of the usage and storage of potentially dangerous chemicals used during the processes of plating and enamelling of Aga and Rayburn stoves. Also, the associated fire risks regarding these chemicals. The inevitable increase in the number of vehicle movements along the roads forming the Industrial site by heavy lorries and other plant, should be considered.

4. Financial Matters :

The Chairperson read out the list of proposed payments recorded on the Agenda and payment of all these items was proposed by Cllr Woodward and seconded by Cllr McGreavy. These were then passed unanimously by the Committee. Cheques for these payments were then signed by the Chairperson and Cllr Gilling.

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

6. Matters of Report :

The Chairperson told the Committee that she and Cllrs Champion, Bowden and Lloyd-Jones had undertaken a tour of the Village to inspect areas where it was thought that foliage should be cut back and various repair works undertaken. They had found that the area's most in need of attention were the area around the Old Butcher's shop: the corner of the road opposite the Methodist Church and the entrance to Stowlands. Brambles in particular at all these sites, were a problem. This summer has seen the growth of thick areas of brambles throughout the Village. A price quotation to undertake a "one-off" sorting out of all these areas has been obtained from PGC Contracting Services in the sum of £645.00. That would be followed by an annual cutting of these areas at a cost of £280.00. Cllr Bowden reminded the Committee of a review of the areas alongside the A370 a few years ago, had resulted in a most successful tidying up of the vegetation. He agreed that a similar undertaking should now be arranged. It was agreed by all that the cutting of the vegetation was relatively easy, it was the collection and removal of the vegetation afterwards which was difficult. Cllr Bowden suggested that the PC should obtain three competitive quotes for this work, so that comparisons could be made. The Chairperson agreed to get two more quotes and the matter will be brought up again during a forthcoming Committee meeting. The names of Richard Tilley, Jason Mayo and Greensacres Gardening services were suggested.

The Chairperson then referred to the resignation letter she had received from the Clerk. She pointed out that this would necessitate the recruitment of a new Clerk and that this should be commenced immediately (in order to enable the present Clerk to possibly undergo surgery at short notice and be absent from his duties). She suggested the formation of a sub-committee to resolve the wording of the advert; the rate of pay to be offered; the list of tasks and duties to be undertaken by the Clerk and the preferred source of candidate (i.e. an existing Clerk of one or more parishes, or a non standing local/district Parish Councillor with the relevant experience. It was resolved that the sub-committee should consist of Cllrs Rawles; Webb; Bowden and Lloyd-Jones. The first meeting will take place on Monday 17th November at 3.00pm at the home of the Chairperson. She will advise these members if those arrangements change.

The final matter raised by the Chairperson was the next meeting of the full Committee on Monday 1st December. She asked if assistance could be given to enable tea/coffee and mince pies could be made available to the Committee in view of it being the Christmas meeting.

Cllr Webb raised the usage of Mendip Road by heavy lorries and other vehicles who are not familiar with the layout of the Industrial Development site. Often drivers miss the entrance into the Industrial site and then turn in Rookery Close. She said that Mr Tim Roper (the owner of the site) will investigate new signage in Mendip Road which would need to be done through the Highways Dept. at SCC. She will report any progress being made regarding this.

The second matter she raised related to the Cider Farm at Rooksbridge. She was aware that a complaint has been made regarding the absence of planning approval for the use of the land as a Cider factory. Cllr Gilling said that enforcement proceedings were being taken by SDC against the owner and no action was either appropriate nor necessary, by the Parish Council.

Cllr Gilling reported the overgrown state of the bus shelter adjoining 9 Mendip Road, East Brent. Thick brambles have grown up around the bus shelter making its usage very difficult by pedestrians. He will report the matter to Clean Surrounds Dept. at SDC.

Cllr Bowden raised the state of the roadway and curb edging between the Knoll Inn and the War Memorial. The fence is leaning and there are cracks in the tarmac. The Clerk will forward detail of how to contact the Highways Department, to Cllr Bowden. Cllr Bowden also told the Committee that bails of silage have been left in the field next to the Cemetery in Hill Lane by the present holder of the grass-keep to the land. Cllr Bowden has contacted Mr Robert Stone at Messrs Greenslade Taylor Hunt in Burnham (the Parish Council's auctioneers) to ask that he makes contact with the successful bidder to ensure that these bales are removed before the end of the tenancy. Finally, he suggested that the Parish Council once again thanks Mrs Wendy Dover and

Mr Geoff Adams for their help throughout the last year regarding locking and un-locking the Cemetery gates every day. It has become customary for a box of biscuits and a thank-you card to be given to them at Christmas time. This was unanimously approved by the whole Committee and Cllr Woodward will arrange for this.

The Clerk addressed the meeting and he firstly apologised for causing the Committee the inconvenience of having to go through the process of selecting a new Clerk to succeed him, following his resignation. The letter he had given to the Chairperson outlined the reasons why he needed to resign from his post and his genuine sadness and reluctance to do so. Ideally he would have liked to remain as Clerk to EBPC for at least two more years.

Although only being obliged to give one months period of notice, he accepted that the process of selecting his successor may take beyond that period of time. He will try to stay at his post at least until a new Clerk has been appointed and hopefully for a while thereafter, in order to ensure that there is a seamless transmission from one Clerk to another. This is in an attempt to avoid a repeat of the very difficult time for him and the Councillors, during the last change in 2012.

He said that the role of being the Clerk was evolving and changing each year and it is no longer able to be carried out on a part time basis as has traditionally been the case, until now.

Whilst the remuneration package offered by EBPC has never been of any particular concern to the present Clerk, he accepts that this has inadvertently placed EBPC in a somewhat difficult position. His successor will expect to be remunerated at a higher rate of pay per hour and one more commensurate with the number of hours it is necessary for the Clerk to work. In addition, his replacement may claim other benefits to which he/she is entitled and which the present Clerk has always ruled out. These include claiming a mileage allowance and 10% of the Council Tax payable on his/her private home (to compensate for its usage as "the Clerk's office") and pay towards the heating and lighting thereof. The result of this is that the total remuneration package needed to attract a suitable recruit to the new post, will be higher than the current 35% of the total Precept budget. Finally, the Clerk promised to assist the sub-committee members who will chose his successor, by producing sheets outlining the Clerk's duties and roles etc., together with any other tasks they ask of him.

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

The next meeting of East Brent Parish Council will be held on Monday 1st December 2014 at 7.30pm, in East Brent Village Hall