Parish Council
Thursday 20-Jun-2024 @ 18:30
Dave Law Sports Pavilion, Park Crescent, Stewartby

MINUTES

1: Apologies
Apologies were received from Cllr Banks. It was noted that Cllr Fraser is now on maternity leave.

2: Declarations on Interest in items on the Agenda
None

3: To consider any applications for dispensation
None

4: Public Participation
Cllr Melville welcomed Tom to the meeting. Tom has expressed an interest in becoming a Parish Councillor.

5: Minutes of the previous meeting
The Council RESOLVED that Cllr Melville should sign the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on the 16th May 2024 as a true and accurate record.

6: Matters arising from previous minutes
Solar Panels – the Clerk has been unable to make any further progress on this matter due to other work commitments.

Cllr Haley and the Clerk continue to work on the website. James Stirling will be carrying out further works during the Summer.

Ongoing issues with emails not being received by Bedford Borough Council. Cllr Spice will speak to Laura Church about this.

Clerk now has the details so that the invoice can be raised for the Cherry Trees in the Memorial Garden.

7: Chairman's Report
The Chair that Universal Studios had contacted him a few weeks ago to say that everything was still very positive however there would be a 6 – 8 weeks delay because in moving forward because of the General Election.

Cllr Melville advised that Warners were getting back on track. The Caretaker is now managing the contractors on a day-to-day basis however the Council should look to put this work out for tender.

The meeting was advised that Stewartby Bowls Club had requested keys for the kitchen as they were unable to access it on Monday evening. The Caretaker had been off sick that day and the booking overlooked.

It was RESOLVED that they would not be issued with keys to the kitchen. An alternative point of contact would be given should this situation arise in the future.

The Caretaker has spoken to the Chair to raise some concerns about his role. This will be discussed as a Confidential Item at the next meeting.

8: Report from Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Spice advised that the Executive Twon Centre vision had been signed off and that an interim team would be put in place to determine how the Debenhams building will be used.

The budget for Wixams Station has also been signed off. This is for a two-track

station that will open late 2026.

Town Deal monies will be used to replace the Greyfriars roundabout with traffic lights. This will make the area safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

Following the acquisition of the former Police Station, Bedford Borough Council is working in partnership with bpha to build new low-level accommodation in the Greyfriars area to replace the high-rise flats. This will be achieved through a “move once” policy.

The Council has also purchased two properties in Bedford to reduce the spend on temporary/hotel costs. The Housing Team has employed an additional 22 people.

There are concerns about the lack of secondary school places in the Borough should an incoming government charge VAT on school fees.

Cllr Spice expressed her wish to be involved in quarterly Parish Council surgeries and will look at dates with Cllr Melville.

She advised that there is no update on the activity at the old Bricklayers Arms site or the bungalow.

Cllr Spice will be putting together a booklet for residents, once the General Election has taken place, about the Conservatives first year in Bedford.

9: Clerk’s Financial Report

9.1 Authorise payments for BACS Transfer
The Council RESOLVED to authorise the BACS Reports for the Parish Council and the Sports Pavilion.

9.2 Balances of Accounts
Members were advised that as at the 31st May 2024, the balances of the Parish Council and Sports Fields accounts were as follows:

£47,535.64
£37,104.51
£20,877.46
£419,342.66

9.3 Budget Monitoring
The Clerk advised that they had been unable to complete this due to other work commitments. The information for the first quarter of the financial year will be available at the meeting in July 2024.

9.4 Annual Return & Internal Audit Report
The Clerk shared the Internal Audit Report with the Council. The Clerk advised that she had been unable to prepare the accounts on an Income & Expenditure basis as advised by Mazars, external Auditor, due to her personal circumstances and the withholding of belongings by another party. This has meant that the Clerk has been unable to reclaim VAT and these figures are required for Income & Expenditure Accounts.

The Clerk has prepared the Annual Return to the best of her ability given the circumstances and will need to provide a letter to Mazars outlining her personal circumstances. The Chair advised that he would sign the letter once drafted.

The Council RESOLVED to approve the figures on the Annual Return and the recommendations in the Internal Audit Report.

10: Quotations for authorisation

10.1 Bus Shelter Roof Works
It was RESOLVED that these works would be put on hold as the Council does not

have sufficient funds. Cllr Law and Haley will look into whether any grants are available.

10.2. Repair of Surface under the Basket Swing at the Sports Pavilion
The meeting was advised that Warners no longer undertake these works and the other quote that had been received was considered to be excessive.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would ask the Caretaker to monitor the condition and report back if there is further deterioration.

10.3 Limiters and Spacers for Outdoor Gym Equipment
It was RESOLVED that the Council would accept the quote for the limiters and spacers for the outdoor gym equipment.

10.4 Bedfordshire Town & Parish Council Association (Annual Subscription)
It was RESOLVED that the Council would renew the membership and await the invoice.

11: Planning Applications & Decisions

11.1 None

11.2 None

12: Amenities:

12.1 Highways/Lighting
It was RESOLVED that Cllr Law needed to carry out an inspection.
Concerns were noted about the overgrown bushes when coming out of Stewartby and turning right on to the B530 to Ampthill. The overgrown bushes mean that you cannot see ongoing traffic.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk would write to Houghton Conquest Parish Council.

Cllr Law will contact Bidwells regarding overgrown verges.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr Melville would speak to Warners regarding the overgrown hedge near the Railway Bridge / bungalows. It was also RESOLVED that a letter would be written to the residents of Stewartby Way to remind them that it is their responsibility to maintain the trees.

12.2 Recreation Area
Cllr Burnage advised that the play equipment on The Green has a 20-year guarantee and she has been advised that the Zipwire should not be in the state that it is.

Cllr Burnage and Law arranging a further meeting with Creative Play to consider grants and equipment.

Quote to be obtained for “testing” of the equipment.

Cllr Melville reported that the roundabout in the Sports Pavilion play area was beyond repair. Quotes for a replacement will be obtained and the Caretaker will remove the existing one.

12.3 Newsletter
Cllr Melville will look at producing a newsletter after the Summer event.

12.4 Sports Field/Pavilion
Cllr Melville advised that Warners were not aware that they had been instructed to complete the pitch maintenance work. This matter has now been resolved.

12.5 Village Hall

Cllr Serino to look at the ceiling in the Committee Room before the next meeting.

12.6 Policing
Cllr Melville advised that the crime statistics remained low and that another Police Officer has been appointed.

12.7 Encyclis
None

13: Community Events 2024

Cllr Melville advised that 620 tickets have been sold to date. He also advised that despite risk assessments and documentation being submitted to Bedford Borough Council in February 2024, a 6-page letter was received a week ago with compliance issues. The Council was given 5 days to submit all information.
Cllr Melville advised that Councillors would be required to help on the day from 7.00 am onwards.

Cllr Melville thanked the Clerk for her hard work connected to the event.

14: Grants

Cllr Melville asked Cllr law to chase the outcome of the grants for the Village Hall floor urgently.

Cllr Haley will approach the Co-op about sponsoring the Christmas Tree this year.

15: Council Surgery / Community Engagement

It was disappointing that no members of the public came to the Parish Council Surgery. Dates will be set quarterly and Universal Studios to be approached for their involvement.

Cllr Haley to setup a poll and QR code to ascertain what the member of the public would like.

16: Park Crescent – Traffic Survey & Consultation

Bedford Borough Council has suggested a traffic survey and consultation at a cost of between £3-4k.

It was RESOLVED that this had not been included in the budget and could therefore not be considered.

17: Items of an urgent nature or for inclusion on the next agenda

None

18: Close of Meeting and items for the next Agenda.

Meeting closed at 8.12 pm.

19: Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 18th July 2024 @ 6.30 pm.