MINUTES

1: Apologies
Apologies were received from Bedford Borough Cllr Spice.

2: Declarations on Interest in items on the Agenda
None

3: To consider any applications for dispensation
None

4: Public Participation
None

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 19th September 2024 as a true and accurate record.

6: Matters arising from previous minutes
The Clerk advised that data needed to be cleaned on Scribe to complete the VAT Returns for 2023-24 and the first quarter of this year. The supplier VAT registration numbers need to be input.
The Clerk advised that a response was still awaited from E-On with regard to the solar panels however they had previously advised that this process can take a few months.
The Clerk advised that she had been in contact with Badger Hill Christmas Tree Farm about the Christmas Tree but still needed to arrange a time to go and chose a tree.
The Clerk apologised for missing the Christmas Dinner off the Agenda. This will be considered at the meeting in November.
Cllr Law had advised that she had not followed up on the lorries that are using the Brickworks Site. She will action this immediately due to the growing concerns.

7: Chairman's Report
Cllr Melville advised that the Police had welcomed the news about the possibility of using the Committee Room in the Village Hall as a base. He will continue to meet with the Police and update the Council accordingly.

Hr advised that the Parish Council Christmas Dinner would be held on Friday 6th December 2024 at 7.30 pm.

8: Report from Bedford Borough Council
None

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. A duplicate payment for Viking needs to be removed from Scribe.

9.2 Balances of Accounts
Members were advised that as at the 30th September 2024, the balances of the Parish Council and Sports Fields accounts were as follows:

£57,608.83
£37,279.41
£8,529.79

£420,910.89

9.3 Budget Monitoring
The Clerk advised that a Budget Monitoring Report had been circulated for all Councillors to review. Some issues with Scribe have prevented the accounts being shown separately. The Clerk is working with Scribe to resolve this.

9.4 Annual Return 2023-24 External Audit Report
The Clerk presented the audited Annual Return (AGAR) and Mazars findings from the external audit process. It has been acknowledged that the Council has been unable to produce the accounts in accordance with last year's recommendations as the Clerk has been unable to retrieve the necessary paperwork from her former home. Mazars have been sympathetic to this.

They noted that the Financial Regulations had not been considered for some time however this was addressed earlier this year. It was also noted that we do not appoint the Internal Auditor annually.

9.5 Appointment of Internal Auditor
The Council RESOLVED to appoint Leena Bains as the Internal Auditor for the 2024-25 financial year.

9.6 Trade Accounts/Credit Facilities
It was RESOLVED that the Caretaker could setup trade accounts with suppliers to take advantage of discounts however these would not include credit facilities.

10: Quotations for authorisation

10.1 PAT Testing
The Council REOLVED to accept the quote from TECC Ltd who they have used previously for the PAT Testing that is due to be completed before the end of the year.

It was also RESOLVED to get a quote from Rushton Electrical for these works next year.

10.2 Revised Quote for Replacement Roundabout
It was RESOLVED to accept this quote from JMR Groundworks however Cllr Haley is trying to secure grant funding for this.

10.3 Pollardising of Tree in the Village Hall Care Park & Maintenance of Willow Trees
It was RESOLVED to accept the quote from Marston Vale Tree Care for these works.

10.4 Removal of Play Equipment on The Green
It was RESOLVED to accept the quote from JMR Groundworks however, following the ROSPA Safety Inspection, the train, beam and slice can remain.

10.5 Grounds Maintenance Tenders
It was RESOLVED to accept the tender from Countrywide for an initial 12- month period. The contract will start on the 1st January 2025 and the existing contract will be end on the 31st December 2024.

11: 11.1 Planning Applications & Decisions

Ref: 24/01889/MAR Major Reserved Matters Application proposed approval of reserved matters (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the construction of a new railway station building, car parking facilities associated with the station, EV charging units and other associated works and infrastructure pursuant to outline planning permission 11/01380/M73 (99/01645/OUT as amended). @ Land For Railway Station Meadow Road Wixams Bedfordshire
The Council RESOLVED that it had no objections to this application.

11.2 Planning Applications & Planning Decisions received after the despatch of the Agenda
None

11.3 Update on Universal Studios
None

12: Amenities:

12.1 Highways/Lighting
The Clerk advised that there had been a report of a streetlight not working. This was referred to Andy Muskett.

12.2 Recreation Area
Cllr Burnage advised that she had received a quote for £76,679 for the play area in the Green.

Cllr Fraser raised concerns about drainage on the site and that the equipment was often not accessible due to flooding.

It was RESOLVED that the quote that Cllr Burnage and the design will be considered at the next meeting together with the possible grants that are available.

The Council also RESOLVED to accept the quote from JMR Groundworks for the removal of the existing equipment apart from the beam, slide and train.

12.3 Newsletter
Cllrs Fraser and Banks have completed the first newsletter that is now being printed. The next one will be due in 8 weeks.

12.4 Sports Field/Pavilion
Cllr Banks advised that the soccer camp will be taking place during half-term. Two home teams are using the football pitches on a Saturday and three on Sundays.

12.5 Village Hall
The Clerk reminded the Council that they would need to submit a pre-planning application to determine whether solar panels could be fitted at the Village Hall.

12.6 Policing
Cllr Melville advised that there were ongoing issues with anti-social behaviour. The crime statistics mainly related t domestic incidents. It is important that residents report incidents to the police.

12.7 Encyclis
Cllr Law advised that the next meeting would be in January 2025.

13: Community Events 2024

A meeting was held last week to discuss the Christmas Fair and the Remembrance event.

14: Grants

It was RESOLVED to provide a grant of £1,000 to the Wootton Trust for Stewartby residents.

15: Council Surgery / Community Engagement

A date for the next Council Surgery has not bee agreed however this will be in the New Year.

16: Village Hall & Sports Pavilion Premises & Fire Risk Assessments

The Council considered the assessments that had been completed by an

external consultant. The Council has already actioned the majority of the recommendations including completing the 5-year fixed wiring testing.

Concerns still remain about the Bowls Club and their storage of chemicals.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk will write to the Bowls Club to advise them of the areas of concern and that these matters need to be remedied.

17: Cold Weather Support Plan

The Plan was agreed in principle however it is dependent on getting sufficient volunteers to run it.

Cllr Fraser will design a poster with a two-week deadline to try and identify potential volunteers.

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

None

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

Meeting closed at 8.06 pm.

20: Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 21st November 2024 @ 6.30 pm.