



BENWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Benwick Parish Council meeting on Monday 6th November 2023 at the village hall

Present	Cllrs M Chapman, L Keppel-Spoor, R Few, R Emmitt, R Taylor, J Ablewhite, S Lowry, Clerk R Robinson and five members of the public	
152/23-24	Apologies for absence Cllr Tim Taylor (FDC)	
153/23-24	Declarations of Interest Cllrs Ablewhite and Keppel-Spoor declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in item 158/23-24 Village Hall	
153/23-24	PUBLIC TIME Biodiversity is on the agenda below and Benwick in Bloom report that CCC Highways approve their verges in Benwick to be planted with wildflowers. Would the Parish Council partner with Benwick in Bloom on this? Cllr Chapman referred to the FACT meeting where there were some good ideas about biodiversity e.g. at the back of the cemetery, but there were no volunteers. Benwick in Bloom propose a swathe of about 50cm width up Whittlesey Rd and as a backdrop on part of Skeifs Row, plus several more places. Cllr Chapman proposes a pilot project to see how the villagers react, as opinion will be divided and invites Benwick in Bloom to propose a plan and to send it to the council for discussion at the December meeting. Benwick in Bloom has been awarded a certificate for their efforts to make Fenland safer, cleaner and greener. The paint is peeling off the footbridge over the Old River Nene and the wood is rotten under the paint. A photo has been sent to the Clerk and was circulated. Councillors to look at the bridge. The council was of the opinion that the placing of knotted poppies on the pound for the remembrance period would be a good thing. The war memorial needs weeding. Cllr Chapman to do the work. The streetlight on the corner of River Close and Whittlesey Rd is out of order. Clerk to investigate if it is one of ours and order a repair if so. A prowler was seen on CCTV on Whitehart Drive; are neighbourhood watch signs available. These would need to be posted by an actual official neighbourhood watch group. The council would consider subsidising the signs. Benwick in Bloom wish to plant daffodils on the Pound. Councillors prefer to await the full project on the Pound. As well as the Parish Council, the Christmas Lights Committee, the Benwick Village Hall Committee, the Ladies Club and the Five Alls Petanque Team will be laying wreaths for remembrance this year. The defibrillator was opened but not used; new pads are needed. Clerk has purchased two sets of pads (one as a spare set) and they have been delivered to Cllr Taylor to install on the defibrillator. Put on agenda for next month for reimbursement. Clerk reports that some Parish Councils are starting to have difficulties finding unmetered supplies of electricity after Npower (who are our supplier) have ceased supplying them. Clerk to check our contract situation	Cllr Chapman Clerk Cllr Taylor Clerk Clerk
154/23-24	Confirmation of Minutes It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to approve and sign the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 2 nd October 2023	Agreed
155/23-24	Matters Arising none	
156/23-24	Youth club Keep on the agenda and write to Tim asking him to come and speak on the matter	Clerk
157/23-24	County & District Councillors Reports Clerk read emails from Cllr Tim Taylor (FDC) which referred to people interested in helping with the youth club, e.g. anglers and a local fishing lake and a possibility of community transport to take the youths to the fishing lake. Tim proposes that the Parish council offers some subsidy towards the costs. The second email referred to weeds and ragwort and also to the problem of sewerage backing up into properties in Benwick. Anglia Water have identified the main drain	

	causing the problem to be the one that runs under the school grounds. There are problems with access to the school grounds such as CCC not providing out of hours staff to facilitate access and/or Anglia Water employees needing to be DBS checked in order to be onsite unsupervised. Additionally, Tim is trying to do something about the dogs barking at the top of the High Street. Clerk has contacted FDC on behalf of the public as requested at the last meeting. Clerk took the address of a member of the public for forwarding to FDC, so they can issue diaries to record the nuisance.			Clerk
159/23-24	War memorial Cllr Chapman is looking for an architect to work on the design and produce costings for us			Cllr Chapman
160/23-24	Warm hubs/ Community lounge Cllr Lowry report that he has obtained a grant of £2,500 from Cambs ACRE to spend on a weekly community lounge for Benwick for 22 weeks from 1 st November to 31 st March. This money is for rent, food and drink, external speakers, advertising etc. He will be required to account for the money spent, reporting weekly to ACRE and he and his wife will need to do a 1 hour zoom training. Can be flexible about activities. He plans to do it on Saturdays for about 4 hours in the church room of the village hall. Turf Fen charity might be able to subsidise the FACT bus to do two runs around the village, one to pick up the attendees, the other to take them home. Clerk to find out costs/availability. ACRE will send the money to the Benwick Parish Council account – Cllr Lowry to arrange, to be held on trust for the community lounge budget. Clerk to send expenses forms to Cllr Lowry. It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED that we support Sean's initiative as outlined and that we will receive the grant from ACRE and will spend it according to their conditions for the objects that they set out and that Cllr Lowry is authorised to spend money as outlined in the agreement and to recover it from the grant money held by us as expenses.			Cllr Lowry Clerk Agreed Cllr Lowry
161/23-24	Cemetery a) push testing – Cllrs Chapman and Ablewhite to carry this out this week. b) hedging – Clerk gave a costing of £460 to purchase the hedge whips for hedging on both sides. It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to purchase the hedge with this budget. Clerk to email mixes again. Put agenda for next month to decide species and timing.			Cllrs Chapman and Ablewhite Agreed Clerk
162/23-24	Clock mechanism await a councillor inspecting the mechanism and clockface			Cllr Keppel-Spoor
163/23-24	Road safety to discuss and agree any actions needed including on a) MVAS operation – Clerk to discover the cost of Fenland Electric moving the MVAS and the solar panel and to download the data; and the cost of two more brackets b) LHI bid – we have had several successful LHI bids in the past; ideas are needed			Clerk
164/23-24	Income & Expenditure a) It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to approve the following accounts for payment			
	Npower	Electricity September - DD paid 18/10/2023 (inc. VAT)	£119.77	
		Sub-total pre-authorised by Council, paid October	£119.77	
	HHA Grounds Maint.	October Cemetery (inc. VAT)	£392.40	
	R Robinson	Expenses & salary	£309.98	
		Subtotal to authorise for payment now	£702.38	
		TOTAL EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED	£822.15	
	b) Clerk's report on the October bank reconciliation is at appendix 1			
165/23-24	Correspondence a) Rural Services Network, Bulletin (email 3/10/2023, 10/10/2023, 17/10/2023) b) FDC Press release (email 2/10/2023, 3/10/2023 x2, 11/10/2023, 13/10/2023) Elections (email 2/10/2023) c) CAPALC Bulletin (email 19/10/2023) Training (email 16/10/2023) Financial regs consultation (email 19/10/2023) d) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin (email 28/9/2023, 12/10/2023, 19/10/2023) Newsletter (email 1/11/2023) e) Highways - Incident report (email 4/10/2023) events (email 2/10/2023) Gritting (email 17/10/2023) f) Rachel Coxcoon – climate change survey g) CCC –Newsletter (email 29/9/2023) Fall prevention (email 12/10/2023) h) NHS CAMBS – newsletter (email 2/10/2023) i) Greater Cambridge Partnership (email 29/9/2023)			

	<p>j) ACRE – water-care (email 29/9/2023)</p> <p>k) Northwest Anglia Dementia Project (email 3/10/2023)</p> <p>l) Greater Cambridge Partnership (email 29/9/2023)</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED that Cllr Chapman would do the training and we would acquire a little gritter. Clerk to find out the cost</p>	<p>Agreed Cllr Chapman Clerk</p>
166/23-24	Police Report no comment	
167/23-24	Biodiversity & habitat initiatives Clerk advised that he believes a 50cm wide strip is required to be left as mown grass to be walkable on. Benwick in Bloom invited to draw up a plan and send it to the clerk. FDC Tim Taylor can supply wildflower mix seeds. Rotavators and grass drills are available locally in the farming community	
168/23-24	Agenda Items/Next Meeting - the format and date of the next Parish Council meeting to be Monday 4 th December 2023 in the church room. Items to be included on agenda should be with the Clerk by Monday 27 th November 2023. Defibrillators to be on the agenda	Clerk
169/23-24	Motion to exclude the Press and Public A resolution under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the special confidential nature of the business to be transacted under item 170/23-24 (Clerk) and item 158/23-24 (Village Hall) the public and press should be excluded for that item was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED	Agreed
158/23-24	<p>Village Hall this item was moved to be discussed at the end of the agenda after the exclusion of the press and public</p> <p>BVHC (Benwick Village Hall Committee) chairman Cllr Ablewhite reported:- School currently have use of the main hall during the school day; there has been no push from villagers to use the main hall during the day; BVHC has the ability to use the hall during the day if needed. Income from the school currently ranges from £2,500-£4,500 per annum. The BVHC have agreed to ask for £6,000 plus £1,000 for cleaning for the school to have use of the main hall during the school day. BVHC would like to secure this agreement for ten years.</p> <p>Cllr Chapman raised the issue that the hourly cost if the hall was being used would be higher because the heating would often be on and the doors open quite a lot.</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor raised the issue of the Trust Deed which states that the village hall is there for the villagers and excessive or subsidised use by another group may be a breach of trust. Other councillors mentioned that the school was part of the village, and that few local groups were using the village hall currently, that bulk discounts were commonplace and that the previous BVHC had been on the point of giving up.</p> <p>Cllr Emmitt mentioned the need for a break clause and periodic review of charges due to costs potentially rising.</p> <p>Cllrs raised the issue that inevitably one day the school would build its own hall and that in preparation for that marketing the weekday hiring out of the hall should be done.</p> <p>Cllr Chapman expressed confidence that the BVHC would get an agreement that allowed some daytime use of the hall by people other than the school. Cllr Ablewhite for the BVHC agreed.</p> <p>Cllr Chapman asked how much it would cost to run the hall for an hour whilst it was open.</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite estimated that the school would not use the hall any more under the proposed arrangements than at present and assured us that the £6,000 would cover the electricity costs of the hall even if the school were actually using the hall for the full amount of time it was available to them.</p> <p>Clerk advised that the ability of the BVHC to allow non-school use of the main hall during school hours should be written into the agreement.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED by 6 in favour and 1 against that BVHC take forward the negotiating stance outlined whilst recognising the concerns voiced here and that Benwick Parish Council would wait and see what they come back to us with.</p> <p>Clerk advised that there might be a legal issue as to whether the trust objects were being upheld by the agreement. Benwick Parish Council will have to decide that at the time that we sign the agreement on behalf of the BVHC and may wish to consider taking legal advice. Clerk also advised that a group of Parish Councillors i.e. a committee not a single councillor would be needed to sign the agreement</p>	<p>Cllr Ablewhite</p> <p>Agreed</p>
170/23-24	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Three very good candidates were interviewed.</p> <p>The Working Group members who conducted the interviews were united in recommending the appointment of Abbey Barnes as Clerk.</p> <p>It was Proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED that Abbey Barnes be appointed to the position of Clerk with employment commencing on 13th November on a starting</p>	Agreed

	salary of £11.42 per hour being SCP point 6 on the NJC scales. Cllr Chapman to produce the contract and organise its signing. Clerk R Robinson to convert from 8 hours per week to 3 hours per week commencing 26 th November and to leave once the new clerk has fully taken up her duties, after the production of the annual budget. Council authorises up to 40 hours of work for R Robinson once the new 3-hour week commences. R Robinson to supervise, train and mentor the new clerk as required and transfer all duties to her in a timely manner.	Cllr Chapman Clerk R Robinson
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Meeting closed 21.33

Appendix 1

Bank Reconciliation		Financial Year ending 31 March 2024	
Benwick Parish Council			
Prepared by Richard Robinson (Clerk & RFO)			
Date	06/11/2023		
Approved by		Chair	
Date	06/11/2023		
Balance per bank statements at end		31/10/2023	£
Current Account		24,579.53	£
NS&I		41,451.24	
			66,030.77
Less: Unpresented Cheques			
Cheque Number	amount	2855 176.00	561.33
		2874 385.33	
Add: Any unbanked cash in transit			0.00
Net bank balances end 31/10/2023		65,469.44	
The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book, as follows:-			
Opening Balance		58,453.87	
Add: Receipts to date		18,611.75	
Less: Payments to date		11,596.18	
Closing Balance		65,469.44	

Earmarked Reserves:

Verge Planting	£1,067.13	
Cemetery Extension	£6,604.17	
Street Lighting	£9,426.58	
The Pound	£2,410.00	
Village Sign	£2,000.00	
War Memorial	£6,000.00	
Mooring	£7,961.16	E M TOTAL £37,660.39
Allotments	£2,191.35	
General Reserve	£27,809.05	