



BENWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Benwick Parish Council meeting on Monday 4 December 2023 at the village hall

Present	Cllrs L Keppel-Spoor, R Few, R Taylor, J Ablewhite, S Lowry, Clerks R Robinson and A Barnes and five members of the public.	
171/23-24	Apologies for absence Cllr M Chapman.	Accepted
172/23-24	Declarations of Interest Cllrs Ablewhite and Keppel-Spoor declared and Non-Pecuniary Interest in items 178/23-23 and 192/23-24 both in relation to the village hall.	
173/23-24	PUBLIC TIME The Bazaar in the village on Friday night (1 December) was well attended and a success. There were however quite a few comments from attendees that the pathway outside the village hall is uneven. Cllr Chapman and Howard Langford were going to look at this, Clerk to check previous minutes. Cllr Keppel-Spoor to speak to Howard.	Cllr Keppel-Spoor Clerk
174/23-24	Confirmation of Minutes It was proposed by Cllr Keppel-Spoor and AGREED to approve and sign the minutes of the council meeting held on Monday 6 November 2023.	Agreed
175/23-24	Matters Arising Clerk R Robinson updated that the gritter trolley requested by the council can be obtained free of charge providing there is agreement to read the manual, notify Fenland District Council of the routes to be gritted and name authorised individuals for health and safety purposes. Cllr Ablewhite reported that Cllr Taylor had been out and gritted recently after an elderly gentleman fell over. Cllr Keppel-Spoor added that there are 3 gritting bins at locations around the village.	
176/23-24	Youth club Cllr Lowry reported that Stephanie from Cambridgeshire Youth Services has offered to give a presentation to the council and then deliver the session to the community. There is support available, but it will require volunteers. Stephanie is able to attend the February meeting. Cllr Ablewhite proposed, and Cllr Keppel-Spoor seconded that the Clerk invite Cambridgeshire Youth Services and also FDC and CCC Cllrs. This was AGREED.	Clerk Agreed
177/23-24	County & District Councillors Reports No reports received.	
178/23-24	Village Hall There has not been a working group meeting yet, Clerk to defer item to January 2024 Agenda.	Clerk
179/23-24	War memorial It was duly noted that Cllr Chapman needs to advise on costs for different options for the war memorial. Cllr Chapman to provide update at next meeting.	Cllr Chapman
180/23-24	Coffee shop Mr L Cornwell informed the council of his ambition to open a coffee shop between 08:00 and 17:00 daily as a location for people to meet. He advised that there are no commercial premises available within the village and would therefore like to explore the option of a temporary structure on The Pound. Mr Cornwell has approached landowners in the village and they are not interested in renting him space for a temporary structure. The village Spar shop will be doing hot food, via a counter with a hatch, but there will be no seating available. Cllr Ablewhite advised that in keeping with the 2011 Localism Act and 2012 General Power of Competence the council is allowed to undertake commercial activity. A mobile / semi-mobile structure on The Pound would generate a rental income. If Mr Cornwall were to provide the structure, pay rent and cover electricity costs this would be a nice idea. It also provides retail for the village at a time when retail is declining. We would need to agree and take advise on what to charge.	

	<p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor queried the parking, as parking outside the school already bad. Parking on the yellow zig zag lines is illegal.</p> <p>Cllr Lowry queried what kind of structure and Mr Cornwall clarified a log cabin or panelled container of something a similar size to the storage space at the front of the village hall. Cllr Lowry commented that it could be lovely in the summer months and asked if the village has been consulted. Mr Cornwall clarified yes; he had done polls on social media to scope out his idea.</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor felt that the council would need to look into it more as a public space.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr Ablewhite, seconded by Cllr Keppel-Spoor and AGREED to have a rolling Agenda item for this and for Mr Cornwall to provide a description including the size of the structure he proposes and a business plan.</p>	Agreed
181/23-24	<p>Warm hubs/ Community lounge</p> <p>Cllr Lowry reported that the Community Lounge begins this Saturday (9 December) with a local Councillor, Senior Support Services coordinator, Youth Radio and a Rambling organiser attending.</p> <p>Clerk R Robinson highlighted to the council that Benwick Parish Council has entered into the agreement, not Cllr Lowry as an individual and that there is a risk that funding may have to be repaid. There were no concerns raised. Clerk A Barnes to support Cllr Lowry on reporting requirements.</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite queried if funding had been received. Clerk R Robinson confirmed that the full £2500 had been received.</p>	
182/23-24	<p>Cemetery</p> <p>Clerk A Barnes provided planting options for the council's consideration in relation to the hedge planting project. The budget for this project has been voted for and agreed previously. On reviewing the options Cllr Keppel-Spoor voiced that she would like to see some Hazel included. Cllr Ablewhite proposed and Cllr Lowry seconded purchasing 45 plants of 5 different species (Option 4 varieties plus Hazel) to be ordered now for delivery in February 2024 this was AGREED.</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite reported that the cemetery topple testing had been done. One 1980s grave is wobbling and will need work.</p> <p>Clerk R Robinson highlighted that the council needs to refund Mrs Tickner's family. Cllr Keppel-Spoor to try and make contact with them.</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite spoke regarding ratifying Clerk R Robinson's comments to a local undertaker. Cllr Keppel-Spoor agreed that permission does need to be sought and agreed by council.</p> <p>Clerk R Robinson reported that ICCM membership is in process. They were consulted and agreed with what had been said. As a burial authority we need to develop a process for working with undertakers. Cllr Ablewhite added that deed transfer should also be included within these procedures.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor</p> <p>Clerk</p>
183/23-24	<p>Clock mechanism</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor showed the council pictures of the clock currently at March museum. It was difficult to picture the workings, but it did look as though it would be repairable.</p> <p>Cllr Taylor queried whether it could it be taken apart and made into a display in the village hall.</p> <p>Mr Cornwell raised that he knows a clock specialist in the village. Mr Cornwell to provide contact details to the Clerk.</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite felt that the clockface was lost anywhere other than Benwick. A modern mechanism on the old face might be possible. Cllr Keppel-Spoor added that a clock tower at the end of the village would be lovely.</p> <p>Cllr Taylor to contact repair shop TV Programme.</p> <p>Clerk R Robinson added that as a last resort the Church of England have a network of people who would take the clock on.</p> <p>Clerk to contact clock specialist and report back to the council.</p>	<p>Mr Cornwell</p> <p>Cllr Taylor</p> <p>Clerk</p>
184/23-24	<p>Defibrillators</p> <p>Cllr Taylor reported that one of the village defibrillators was called into action Saturday 2 December, but not required. An Ambulance arrived swiftly.</p>	

	<p>Cllr Taylor proposed locations for additional defibrillators at Old West and Whittlesey Road (Cricketers / Neneside). Both locations would need a resident to agree to have it powered by their household electricity supply.</p> <p>Cllr Taylor proposed the purchase of two more units. Cllr Ablewhite proposed three more units be purchased on the basis that we have two locations identified already. Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed that 2 units be purchased now, with a possibility for a third if a suitable location is identified. This was seconded by Cllr Ablewhite on the basis that if these are cheaper than the £2240 spent last time for 2 units and cabinets, the Clerk is given approval to purchase immediately. This was AGREED.</p> <p>It was questioned if they could be powered from street lamps. Cllr R Robinson confirmed they can be, this involves liaising between UK Power Networks and our contractors which has taken up to 12 months in the past.</p>	Agreed Clerk
185/23-24	<p>Whittlesey Road Bridge damaged bin</p> <p>Fenland DC have confirmed PC are responsible for repair, Cllr Lowry offered to repair as issue is with a damaged plank of wood.</p>	Cllr Lowry
186/23-24	<p>Donations</p> <p>An application for £250 was received from Benwick in Bloom. Clerk R Robinson highlighted that the total donations budget is £200. Cllr Keppel-Spoor asked what was going to be planted and where. J Hindle clarified it is to plant all the tubs around the village and also raised that the bill from the local supplier has risen. Cllr Keppel-Spoor highlighted that they would prefer a more sustainable option.</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite proposed and Cllr Lowry seconded that £200 be awarded to Benwick in Bloom. This was AGREED.</p>	Agreed
187/23-24	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk R Robinson requested the council approve the NJC pay award for this year, including immediately raising both Clerk's pay from £11.42 to £12.42 per hour, backdated to 1st April 2023. This was AGREED.</p> <p>Clerk A Barnes suggested a WhatsApp group be set up to communicate with Cllrs over important / urgent matters to draw their attention to. All Councillors present were willing to be included.</p> <p>Clerk A Barnes requested council approval to attend 3 modules of finance training through a recognised CAPALC provider, totalling £90. Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed the training was authorised; this was AGREED.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Agreed</p>
188/23-24	<p>Proposed closure of Manea Fire Station</p> <p>Cllr Ablewhite questioned the statistics and rationale of this proposal, highlighting that the 3 whole time fire stations are the other side of Cambridgeshire.</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor added that there is a big rural area between March and Chatteris.</p> <p>Cllr Taylor added that it appears to be an erosion of services.</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed the Clerk draft a letter of objection on behalf of the council.</p> <p>Clerk A Barnes said she would circulate a draft prior to sending along with any information on the rationale for the proposal. Cllr Ablewhite seconded the proposal and it was AGREED.</p>	Agreed Clerk
189/23-24	<p>Play Park</p> <p>Cllr Lowry reported speaking to a play equipment provider who can obtain equipment using lottery funding and also writes the grants applications. Cllr Lowry proposed that as Fenland District Council own the park the Parish Council should contact them and say we want it.</p> <p>Cllr Keppel-Spoor added that there is Section 106 funding available and queried if it could this be used for exercise equipment.</p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr Lowry and seconded by Cllr Ablewhite for the Clerk to speak with Fenland Parks team and liaise with the equipment provider if the project is authorised by the District Council. This was AGREED.</p>	Agreed Clerk
190/23-24	<p>CAPALC Annual General Meeting – Thursday 14 December</p> <p>There were no expressions of interest in attending the AGM.</p>	
191/23-24	<p>Highways matters</p> <p>a) Clerk R Robinson updated the council on the cost for the Electrical company to move the brackets and equipment is £120 bi-monthly. The cost of new brackets is £160 to be able to move the solar panel more easily. Cllr Taylor questioned if two more brackets could be procured and kept in place. Cllrs Keppel-Spoor asked if there was any green funding available to assist such as the Ransonmoor fund to procure additional solar panels.</p>	

	Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed that the Clerk get quotes for solar panels and then look to apply for funding in the next round (February 2024), this was agreed.	Agreed																											
	Cllr Ablewhite felt the priority should be to get the existing speed sign up and running. Cllr Keppel-Spoor asked who had the equipment, it is Cllr Chapman, but he will need assistance to install it. Cllr Ablewhite said he is happy to take this on as a project, Cllr Taylor also volunteered assistance. Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed it is discussed again at the next meeting; this was AGREED.	Agreed																											
	b) Cllr Ablewhite has visually inspected the footbridge over the Old Nene River and reported one of the safety rails has rotted, other damage is largely cosmetic. Cllr Ablewhite proposed that the Clerk contact Cambridgeshire County Council and see if the meeting; engineer can also assess overall safety of the structure. This was AGREED.	Agreed Clerk																											
	Clerk R Robinson highlighted that an issue with preparatory work means paint is peeling, so any works undertaken the contractor should be encouraged to do a decent job. Mrs J Hindle has photos and will send to the Clerk.	Mrs Hindle																											
192/23-24	Income & Expenditure It was proposed by Cllr Keppel-Spoor and AGREED to approve the following accounts for payment.																												
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Npower</td><td>Electricity October - DD paid 18/11/2023 (inc. VAT)</td><td>£ 139.43</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Sub-total pre-authorised by Council, paid November</td><td>£ 139.43</td></tr> <tr> <td>HHA Grounds Maint.</td><td>November Cemetery (inc. VAT)</td><td>£ 392.40</td></tr> <tr> <td>R Robinson</td><td>Expenses & salary</td><td>£ 1053.05</td></tr> <tr> <td>A Barnes</td><td>Expenses & salary</td><td>£ 184.23</td></tr> <tr> <td>Benwick Village Hall</td><td>Council meetings hire</td><td>£ 228.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Julie Green</td><td>Christmas tree contribution</td><td>£ 140.00</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Subtotal to authorise for payment now</td><td>£ 1997.68</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>TOTAL EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED</td><td>£ 2137.11</td></tr> </table>	Npower	Electricity October - DD paid 18/11/2023 (inc. VAT)	£ 139.43		Sub-total pre-authorised by Council, paid November	£ 139.43	HHA Grounds Maint.	November Cemetery (inc. VAT)	£ 392.40	R Robinson	Expenses & salary	£ 1053.05	A Barnes	Expenses & salary	£ 184.23	Benwick Village Hall	Council meetings hire	£ 228.00	Julie Green	Christmas tree contribution	£ 140.00		Subtotal to authorise for payment now	£ 1997.68		TOTAL EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED	£ 2137.11	
Npower	Electricity October - DD paid 18/11/2023 (inc. VAT)	£ 139.43																											
	Sub-total pre-authorised by Council, paid November	£ 139.43																											
HHA Grounds Maint.	November Cemetery (inc. VAT)	£ 392.40																											
R Robinson	Expenses & salary	£ 1053.05																											
A Barnes	Expenses & salary	£ 184.23																											
Benwick Village Hall	Council meetings hire	£ 228.00																											
Julie Green	Christmas tree contribution	£ 140.00																											
	Subtotal to authorise for payment now	£ 1997.68																											
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED	£ 2137.11																											
	b) The Clerk's report on the November bank reconciliation is at Appendix 1. c) Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed, and it was AGREED by all that the administration of bank accounts with Santander and Cambridge and Counties be transferred from current Clerk R Robinson to new Clerk appointed 13/11/23 A Barnes. Current Councillors are: Cllr M Chapman, Cllr R Emmitt, Cllr J Ablewhite, Cllr L Keppel-Spoor, Cllr R Few, Cllr B Taylor and Cllr S Lowry. Clerks and Bank Signatories to complete and submit the paperwork. Clerk R Robinson advised that Santander will not let the Clerk see online banking unless they are a signatory. Cllr Keppel-Spoor highlighted that 2 Cllrs are still required to sign cheques.	Agreed Clerk																											
	d) It was proposed by Cllr Keppel-Spoor and AGREED to have a meeting to discuss the annual budget on Monday 18 December in the evening. Clerk to set up a meeting.	Agreed Clerk																											
193/23-24	Correspondence a) Rural Services Network, Bulletin (email 24/10/23, 7/11/2023, 14/11/2023, 21/11/23) b) FDC Press release (email 24/10/23, 6/11/2023, 7/11/2023, 17/11/2023, 27/11/23, 27/11/23) Member services (email 3/11/2023, 14/11/23, 27/11/23) Agendas (email 10/11/2023) c) CAPALC Bulletin (email 6/11/2023) Training (email 23/11/2023) d) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin (email 09/11/2023, 16/11/23, 23/11/23) Newsletter (email 08/11/2023) e) Highways - Incident report (email 1/11/2023) f) CCC –Newsletter (email 31/10/2023) Flood Committee (email 26/10/2023) HAF (email 14/11/23) Road Safety Education newsletter (15/11/23), LED Streetlighting (email 24/11/23) g) NHS CAMBS – newsletter (email 1/11/2023) h) HMRC (Autumn Statement email 22/11/23) i) Cambridgeshire Community Foundation (Grants bulletin email 17/11/23) j) ACRE – Funding (email 6/11/2023) There were no comments.																												

194/23-24	Planning a) Cllr Ablewhite commented that a more permanent structure at Benwick Primary School is to be welcomed. b) Planning Application Ref: F/YR23/0922/F - Erect an equipment and horse box storage building involving removal of storage container and demolition of existing implement storage barn at Land North West Of 42 Ramsey Road Benwick Cambridgeshire. Cllr Ablewhite noted that the size and scale of new building is tall this is required for height of horse boxes. Cllr Ablewhite proposed no objections, but in terms of reserve matters restrict use to equine and grounds equipment and that the container is removed from site once new building complete. This was seconded by Cllr Keppel-Spoor and agreed, with Clerk to action. c) There were no objections to the disabled parking space in Chapel Gardens.	Agreed Clerk
195/23-24	Police Report There was no police report to discuss at the meeting. Cllr Ablewhite raised that he had heard reports of people going on driveways at 16:30 in the dark. Cllr Taylor added that he is looking at neighbourhood watch scheme.	
196/23-24	Biodiversity and Habitat Initiatives including a) Cllr Lowry reported that he has enquired about a grant for wild seeds and is waiting response. It would be a nice village project with some funding from the council. Cllr Keppel-Spoor highlighted that grass needs to be removed before sowing seeds. Cllr Lowry proposed that the Clerk obtain a quote for preparatory work and sowing seed, this was AGREED. Clerk A Barnes suggested that spraying could be the best thing to contract out given the health and safety considerations. Cllr Ablewhite suggested using already identified council budget and then some general reserves if needed. Cllr Few suggested adding another £1000. Cllr Few questioned whether there were grant funding opportunities. Cllr Lowry requested the quotation include a price for cutting the turf out as well as spraying.	Agreed Clerk
197/23-24	Agenda Items/Next Meeting – Cllr Keppel-Spoor proposed the next meeting on Monday 8 th January 2024, this was agreed. Items to be included on agenda to be with the Clerk by Monday 1 st January 2024.	Agreed

Meeting closed 21:30

Appendix 1

Bank Reconciliation		Financial Year ending 31 March 2024	
Benwick Parish Council			
Prepared by Richard Robinson (Clerk & RFO)			
Date	02/12/2023		
Approved by		Chair	
Date	04/12/2023		
Balance per bank statements at end		30/11/2023	£
Current Account		26,011.39	£
NS&I		41,451.24	
			67,462.63
Less: Unpresented Cheques			
Cheque Number	amount		
			0.00
Add: Any unbanked cash in transit			
			0.00
Net bank balances end 30/11/2023		67,462.63	
The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book, as follows:-			
Opening Balance		58,453.87	
Add: Receipts to date		21,446.75	
Less: Payments to date		12,437.99	
Closing Balance		67,462.63	

Earmarked Reserves:

Verge Planting	£1,067.13	
Community Lounge	£2,500.00	in trust
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	
Allotments	£2,191.35	
General Reserve	£27,302.24	
	E M TOTAL	£40,160.39