



BENWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Benwick Parish Council meeting on Monday 5 February 2024 at Benwick Village Hall

Present	Cllrs M Chapman, L Keppel-Spoor, R Few, R Emmitt, J Ablewhite and R Taylor. Clerk A Barnes and two members of the public.	
221/23-24	Apologies for absence Cllr S Lowry.	Accepted
222/23-24	Declarations of Interest Cllrs Ablewhite and Keppel-Spoor declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in item 228/23-24 in relation to the village hall.	
223/23-24	Public time Public time was opened at 19:32. It was reported that there is a reasonable sized hole in the tarmac near to the sandbox in Chapel Gardens. Clerk to report to Clarion Housing and Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) Highways. It was reported that there is a hole to roadside of the manhole cover in Doddington Road (parallel with the village sign). Clerk to report to Anglian Water. It was reported that there is dog mess along the High Street again. Clerk to contact Fenland District Council (FDC) Cllr T Taylor and establish what the arrangements are to replace the private contractor. It was nice to have Cllr Lowry and the Clerk at the recent Benwick in Bloom meeting. It was raised that the footbridge on Whittlesey Road is rotting on the lower beam. Clerk to contact CCC and chase inspection. It was reported it is evident there are multiple dwellings at 1 High Street, it is also believed residents of this address are parking on the byway between the two bridges at the rear of the High Street / Cricketers Way. Clerk to contact FDC Cllr Tim Taylor for an update. Public time was closed at 19:43.	Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk Clerk
224/23-24	It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to approve and sign the minutes of the council meeting held on Monday 8 January 2024.	
225/23-24	Action Log The Cllrs and Clerk provided an update on actions assigned to them in the action log, details are included within the minutes under the relevant items.	
226/23-24	Outgoing Clerk Cllr Chapman thanked the outgoing Clerk, Mr R Robinson, for all the work they have done and their efforts and contribution to the smooth running of the council. He also wished them the best for all their future endeavours. The outgoing Clerk gave thanks to all the Cllrs and the Chair for their support. They also thanked the members of the public for their community minded spirit and attending meetings.	
227/23-24	County & District Councillors Reports No reports received.	
228/23-24	Village Hall This update was given during item 225/23-2 action log. Cllr Ablewhite updated that CCC representatives including Finance team and Benwick Primary School had met and put forward a proposal to use the old meeting room on a full-time permanent basis. The Village Hall Committee agreed with the proposal, requesting an additional fee of £2500 per annum, which has been agreed in principle by CCC. A draft amendment to the lease will be required prior to April. It was also clarified that the £2500 would be on top of the £6000, providing the hall with a guaranteed income of £8500. Cllr Ablewhite will update the council again once the proposal is finalised and lease amendments have been drafted.	
229/23-24	War memorial No update this meeting.	

230/23-24	Warm hubs/ Community lounge Cllr Ablewhite updated the council that Living Sport had been delivering fitness activities for over 65s in the village, but their funding has run out. Cllrs Lowry and Ablewhite met with Living Sport and have agreed that from Wednesday 14 February the Community Lounge will be run on Wednesdays instead of Saturdays, with armchair exercises taking place as part of the community lounge. Refreshments can then be provided to participants and funding will help pay for an instructor to keep the Living Sport sessions going as they get reasonable attendance. Cllr Ablewhite reported he is currently exploring opportunities for additional grant funding to support even further.			
231/23-24	Cemetery Planting of the hedgerow will take place on Saturday 9 March, led by Cllr Lowry. Cllrs Chapman, Ablewhite, Taylor and Few are planning to support. Benwick in Bloom would also like to support. Equipment and procedures to be discussed at the next meeting. Cllr Taylor asked if the plants were supplied with any protection. Cllr Ablewhite added that the hazel plants are especially important to protect. Clerk to check.			Clerk
232/23-24	Clerk's report and requests a) The current bank account being used by the council is a cheque only account with no facility to make BACs or debit card payments. Several providers have been looked into, but many do not offer accounts for parish councils. CAPALC were also asked for their advice. Terms and conditions for accounts with two alternative banks were sent to Councillors prior to the meeting. The Clerk talked through the pros and cons of each option. Cllr Chapman questioned if we have a working account with a small balance, transferring funds across as needed. The Clerk clarified this isn't possible as BACs payments cannot be made with current provider. Cllr Few queried the account fees of one provider. Cllr Ablewhite advocated moving banking arrangements to something more modern, highlighting that even with the Clerk as a signatory checks and balances are in place with all spending reviewed at council meetings. Cllrs Keppel-Spoor, Ablewhite and Chapman expressed objection to paying a fee and not getting any interest on parish council funds. Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED that the council are not happy with an account that gives zero interest, so the other provider be chosen on the basis that standing orders are amended to ensure the control and authorisation of payments in reflected. b) Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED that the council will open an account with Lloyds. c) Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED that once anew account has been opened the funds from the existing Santander current account will be transferred and the account closed. d) The Clerk has obtained a copy of the document retention policy from CCC and will also see if SLCC has guidelines. Cllr Chapman highlighted that the last archive of documentation was done by the Clerk before the outgoing Clerk, so it is a worthwhile thing to do. Cllr Chapman proposed and it was AGREED that the Clerk be authorised up to 60 additional minutes per week to work on document retention. Cllr Chapman highlighted that Cllr Lowry has some concerns around email use after attending a recent CAPALC Councillor training course. The council have talked previously about this issue. CAPALC advise that moving to .gov email and website addresses may become mandatory. The Clerk informed that the costs for this are approximately £200 per year, this option does mean we could have a councillor section of the website for meeting papers and documentation. Clerk to seek further advice from SLCC.			Agreed Agreed Agreed Agreed Clerk
233/23-24	Highways matters Cllrs Ablewhite and Chapman have discussed the operation of the MVAS units and arrangements for Cllr Ablewhite to collect the hardware and take lead on this are in progress.			
234/23-24	Income & Expenditure a) It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED to approve the following accounts for payment.			Agreed
	Npower	Electricity Invoice for December 2023 - DD paid 18/01/2024 (inc. VAT) Sub-total pre-authorised by Council	£ 167.10 £ 167.10	

	HHA Grounds Maint. R Robinson A Barnes CAPALC	January Cemetery (inc. VAT) Expenses & salary Expenses & salary CAPALC New Clerk Training January 2024 Subtotal to authorise for payment now	£ 392.40 £ 205.20 £ 613.79 £ 250.00 £ 1461.39	
		TOTAL EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED	£ 1628.49	
	b) The Clerk's report on the January Bank Balances is at Appendix 1.			
235/23-24	Correspondence a) Rural Services Network Funding Digest (email 10/01/24) b) FDC Press release (emails 11/01/24, 11/01/24, 16/01/24, 26/01/24, 26/01/2024, 26/01/24, 30/01/24) c) FDC Pride in Fenland (email 29/01/2024) d) Rural and Farming executive committee (email 09/01/24) e) CAPALC Civility and Respect (email resent 11/01/24) f) NALC Chief Executive's Bulletin (emails 11/01/2024, 26/01/24) g) Highways – Events calendar (email 11/01/2024) h) Middle Level Commissioners Bank Raising Briefing (email 11/01/24) i) Chess price increase notification (email 26/01/24)			
236/23-24	Planning Planning application CCC/23/143/FUL – Benwick Primary School. Cllr Chapman noted the access road for builders will come out of Green Lane. It was proposed by Cllr Chapman and AGREED that the Parish Council has no planning related observations, but welcomes the investment in the local primary school infrastructure by CCC to ensure the school's future.			Agreed
237/23-24	Biodiversity and Habitat Initiatives Scattering of the wildflower seeds will take place on Saturday 23 March, led by Cllr Lowry. Cllr Chapman will contact grass cutting contractor to highlight areas to be sown. Attendance and requirements for the day to be refined at next meeting.			
238/23-24	Agenda Items/Next Meeting - to agree the date of the next Parish Council meeting proposed to be Monday 4 March 2024. Items to be included on agenda should be with the Clerk by Monday 26 February 2024.			

Meeting closed 20:36

Appendix 1

Bank Reconciliation				Financial Year ending 31 March 2024	
Benwick Parish Council					
Prepared by Abbey Barnes (Clerk & RFO)					
Date		05/02/2024			
Approved by		Chair			
Date		05/02/2024			
Balance per bank statements at end		31/01/2024		£	£
Current Account				22,081.71	
NS&I				41,451.24	
					63,532.95
Less: Unpresented Cheques					
Cheque Number	amount	2890	185.00		
		2891	112.00		
		2892	24.00		
		2893	1,500.00		
Less: Mistaken credit to bank					1,821.00
Add: Any unbanked cash in transit					0.00
Net bank balances end 31/01/2024				61,711.95	
The net balances reconcile to the Cash Book, as follows:-					
Opening Balance				58,453.87	
Add: Receipts to date				21,675.75	
Less: Payments to date				18,417.67	
Closing Balance				61,711.95	

Earmarked Reserves:

Verge Planting	£1,067.13	
Community Lounge	£2,279.33	in trust
Cemetery Extension	£6,327.05	
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	£22,049.35	
E M TOTAL		£39,662.60