

BERKSWICH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Berkswich Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5 September 2023 at 7.30 pm at Walton Village Hall

Present: Cllr Alan Taylor (Chair), Cllr Malcolm Millichap, Cllr Ann Millichap, Cllr Sue Francis, Cllr Tim Luker, Cllr Bob Gilson, Cllr Caroline Pearson (Vice Chair) and Cllr Vicky Campbell.

In attendance: Cllr Peter Edgeller, Stafford Borough Council, one member of the public and Mrs Sue Fullwood as Clerk.

Cllr Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 Public session

The member of the public raised an issue regarding huge lorries delivering building materials to a property on Kitlings Lane. On Friday 1 September there had been four lorry loads of concrete delivered starting at 7.40 am and as the vehicles couldn't turn around in Kitlings Lane, they had reversed all the way down. She said the lorries had caused damage to walls and hedges in the vicinity possibly including damage to St Thomas' Church wall. The member of the public asked if something could be done to prevent damage in future to the Walton on the Hill conservation area. Cllr Taylor suggested that the Parish Council could write to SBC to ask in future, when planning permission was granted within the conservation area could they include a condition specifying the maximum weight of delivery lorries. **Resolved:** Clerk to write to SBC Planning Department and to chase SCC about the signage for lorries at the top of Kitlings Lane. **Action: Clerk**

23/94 Apologies – received from Cllr Beverley Hughes as she was away and Cllr Michael Norris as he was unwell. **Resolved:** both apologies were noted.

23/95 To record Declarations of Interest regarding items on the agenda. Cllrs Malcolm and Ann Millichap declared an interest in item 23/99 as their property had had solar panels for 12 years and generated income for them.

23/96 Minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 July 2023 – Resolved: It was agreed that the minutes were a true record of the meeting.

23/97 Update on matters arising which were not agenda items
None.

23/98 Speed and Weight Limits in the Milford/Brocton Area and Potential Road Improvements Near Dora Rose Nursing Home

Cllr Sue Francis reported that she had attended a site meeting with SCC. The meeting was attended by SCC Cllr David Williams, SCC Cllr John Francis, Richard Rayson from Highways, the Chairman of Brocton Parish Council and two other people including an SCC solicitor. Cllr John Francis had wanted to reduce the speed limit to 30mph across the area, but the lawyer advised that that could not be done and that it would have to be done in sections, the main section being from Dora Rose nursing home to the Wimpy chalet. A suggestion had been made that there could be a gateway saying 'Welcome to Milford' but there had been no mention of who would pay for this. Cllr Sue Francis had not picked up any discussions on parking problems at Dora Rose, but she was aware that more people were going in and out of there.

The Chairman of Brocton Parish Council said that the aggregate company at Milford had acquired the former Nicholls' depot at Milford and more heavy vehicles were coming through Brocton and that was why Brocton PC had enquired about a weight limit for that road. Cllr Luker felt that regardless of the reason for Brocton requesting the weight limit, the reasons for Berkswich Parish Council's objections remained the same.

Cllr Malcolm Millichap added that it was good that in Cllr David Williams' response letter that SCC had agreed to keep the situation under review due to the planned Shugborough entrance changes. **Resolved:** the contents of Cllr Williams' letter were noted.

23/99 Proposed Solar Farms letter from Cllr John Francis

The Clerk had shared the proposed letter with all councillors ahead of the meeting. Cllr Sue Francis gave some background on the issue, it had started with a planning application at Drointon for a farm of 120 acres and there had been another application for a farm at Hanyard. The proposals were for huge areas of land and farmers were being incentivised to use their land for solar farms. SBC had received 100 letters against the application at Drointon from local people, but had then received 150-200 letters in support of the application from all over the country. Cllr Sue Francis explained that Cllr John Francis had written the letter as he felt this was just the start and solar farms were likely to increase exponentially.

Cllr Luker responded that he felt renewable energy was increasingly important in the context of climate change. He felt that the letter did not look at the bigger picture and each application should be judged on its own merits. Cllr Campbell asked what the land was currently being used for, it was for agricultural use. Cllr Malcolm Millichap pointed out that solar panels were 90% recyclable do the amount of glass and aluminium used in their manufacture. The life of solar panels is longer than originally anticipated. **Resolved:** It was agreed that Berkswich Parish Council would not sign the letter. **Action: Clerk.** Cllr Taylor suggested that if it was felt a letter was necessary, it should be suggesting that SBC/SCC bring forward planning policies for the siting of solar farms.

23/100 LGBCE Consultation on Staffordshire Divisions

The proposals were that Milford would remain in Trent Valley Division, but that Walton on the Hill would be in the Stafford South East Division which would mean that the Parish and the community was split. **Resolved:** Cllr Taylor would write a short letter to LGBCE strongly objecting that Berkswich Parish would be split over two divisions. **Action: Cllr Taylor/Clerk.**

23/101 Maintenance of the Phone Box and Noticeboards

The Clerk had received two quotes for the work in the two days before the meeting. The pros and cons of each quote were discussed. **Resolved:** it was agreed to accept the quote from Creative Landscapes. **Action: Clerk.**

23/102 Issues at Walton Coppice raised by residents of Bluebell Hollow

Cllrs Taylor and Luker had visited three properties at Bluebell Hollow to discuss issues raised by residents. Two residents had been into the Coppice to cut back trees and bushes, and it had been reiterated that there was no public access to the Coppice. One resident had contacted the Council about flooding during heavy rain, but agreed during

the visit that the water was not likely to have come from the Coppice. The gentleman would contact Severn Trent about the issue.

23/103 Bench on the Corner of The Village

A complaint had been received about the state of the bench. **Resolved:** Clerk to investigate options for a new hardwood bench from sustainable sources and if the original plaque from the bench could be cleaned up and reused. **Action: Clerk.**

23/104 Telegraph Pole at the top of The Rise

Cllr Taylor updated the meeting that BT had put in a new pole in a place agreed with him as a resident and had taken the other pole away.

23/105 School Lane Trees and temporary road closure

Cllr Taylor informed Council that an oversight by the contractors earlier this year had meant that the electricity company had not been contacted ~~regarding the road closure~~ and they had had to postpone work on the trees near the power cables. Another road closure had been applied for at the company's own cost and this work was now due to start on 3 October 2023. **Resolved:** Clerk to write to School Lane residents informing them of the new date. Cllr Pearson offered to hand-deliver the letters. **Action: Clerk/Cllr Pearson.**

23/106 Permanent Railings for the steps at the War Memorial

Cllr Millichap suggested a permanent railing at the War Memorial to allow disabled people to access it. Cllr Taylor said he thought that the Borough Council's Conservation Officer would say no to a permanent railing as it potentially would only be used on one day per year. **Resolved:** Cllr Taylor to contact the stone mason regarding a temporary railing that could be slotted into place as required. **Action: Cllr Taylor.**

Cllr Millichap also suggested that a date should be agreed to add to the grounds maintenance schedule to clear the War Memorial of wreaths and vegetation. Stafford Borough Council cleared their memorial in May before the swearing in of the new Mayor. **Resolved:** Clerk to add clearance of the War Memorial to the schedule in May. **Action: Clerk.** Cllr Gilson suggested Milford Hall Estates could be used to clear the Memorial this year. **Resolved:** Cllr Gilson to get the contact details and pass them to the Clerk. **Action: Cllr Gilson.**

23/107 Clean Air Project

The resident had been given the contact details for Staffordshire County Council if she wished to obtain any materials.

23/108 Scarecrow Competition, D-Day and other community events

Cllr M Millichap suggested putting an article in the next newsletter to gauge interest in holding a scarecrow competition in the parish. **Action: Clerk.**

Cllr M Millichap felt that it was important to celebrate the 80th anniversary of D-Day in 2024 and suggested an afternoon tea as had previously been successful or an environmental project at Hollybush Coppice with Berkswich Primary School. **Resolved:** Cllr M Millichap to contact the school to gauge their interest. Clerk to ask for suggestions from the community on Facebook. **Action: Cllr M Millichap/Clerk.**

23/109 Hedgerows on Cedar Way and The Village

There had been complaints regarding hedgerows on Cedar Way and The Village encroaching onto footpaths and endangering people, in particular children attending

Berkswich Primary School. **Resolved:** Clerk to write to the resident(s) of 2 Birch Close to ask them to trim their hedge back to the property line. **Action: Clerk.**

23/110 Attendance at SPCA AGM

Attendance at the AGM was discussed and no-one from Berkswich wished to attend. **Resolved:** Clerk to send apologies. **Action: Clerk.**

23/111 Financial Matters:

- i. **Projects and Proposed Expenditure for 2024/25** – A Finance Working Group was being set up for the end of September to start budget discussions for the next financial year.
- ii. **Bank Reconciliation and expenditure for July and August 2023. Resolved:** unanimously approved.

Berkswich Parish Council
Bank Reconciliation as at 20 July 2023

Receipts			
Company	Description	Amount	Date Received
Total Receipts		£0.00	

Payments						
Paid to	Description	Invoice date	Cheque #	Gross incl. VAT	VAT	Net
Mrs S Fullwood	Clerk Salary & expenses July 23	31/07/2023	773	£984.97	£0.00	£984.97
Staffs Pensions	Empee & Emper contributions July 23	31/07/2023	774	£295.36	£0.00	£295.36
HMRC	NI Cont.s July 23	31/07/2023	775	£6.61	£0.00	£6.61
TGM	Grounds Maintenance June 2023	30/06/2023	777	£2,478.42	£413.07	£2,065.35
				£3,765.36	£413.07	£3,352.29

Cashbook

Opening Balance at 20.06.2023	28,863.69
Add:	
Receipts 20.06.2023 to 20.07.2023	0.00
Less	
Payments 20.06.2023 to 20.07.2023	3,765.36
Cashbook Balance at 20.07.2022	25,098.33

Current Account

Bank statement Balance at 20.06.2023	32,127.41
Less payments made	734, 767, 768, 770, 771, 772, 777
	5,404.00

Less: Unpresented Cheques	Chq No	Amount	
	(HMRC Nov 22) 729	£193.61	
	766	£27.53	
	769	£117.00	
	773	£984.97	
	774	£295.36	
	775	£6.61	
			1,625.08

Add: Receipts	0.00
Add: Unpresented Receipts	0.00
C/A balance carried forward 20.07.2023	26,723.41
Available funds in C/A	£25,098.33

Bank Reconciliation as at 18 August 2023

Receipts			
Company	Description	Amount	Date Received
Total Receipts		£0.00	

Payments						
Paid to	Description	Invoice date	Cheque #	Gross Incl. VAT	VAT	Net
Staffs Parish Councils' Association	Cllr Fundamentals for Cllrs Norris, Campbell, Hughes & Gilson	08/08/2023	778	£144.00	£24.00	£120.00
TGM	Grounds maintenance July 2023	11/08/2023	779	£1,302.48	£217.08	£1,085.40
Walton (Berkswich) Village Hall	Bromage Room 4.7.23	25/07/2023	780	£30.00	£0.00	£30.00
DM Payroll Services Ltd	Payroll April - Sept 2023	11/07/2023	781	£60.00	£0.00	£60.00
Mrs B Hughes	Reimbursement for certified copy of ID	16/08/2023	782	£12.75	£0.00	£12.75
Staffordshire Pension Fund	Empee & Emper contributions August 23	30/08/2023	783	£295.36	£0.00	£295.36
HMRC	Empee & Emper contributions August 23	30/08/2023	784	£25.41	£0.00	£25.41
Mrs S Fullwood	August 23 salary & expenses	30/08/2023	785	£973.67	£0.00	£973.67
Mazars LLP	Ltd Assurance Review 22/23 (AGAR)	24/08/2023	786	£426.00	£71.00	£355.00
Trent Grounds Maintenance	Maintenance August 2023	31/08/2023	787	£1,211.28	£201.88	£1,009.40
Total Payments				£4,480.95	£513.96	£3,966.99

Cashbook

Opening Balance at 20.07.2023	25,105.83
Add:	
Receipts 20.07.2023 to 18.08.2023	0.00
Less	
Payments 20.07.2023 to 18.08.2023	4,480.95
Cashbook Balance at 18.08.2023	£20,624.88

Current Account

Bank statement Balance at 20.07.2023	26,723.41
Less payments made	1,396.44

	Chq No	Amount
Less: Unpresented Cheques	(HMRC Nov 22) 729	£193.61
	766	£27.53
	778	£144.00
	779	£1,302.48
	780	£30.00
	781	£60.00
	782	£12.75
	783	£295.36
	784	£25.41
	785	£973.67
	786	£426.00
	787	£1,211.28
		4,702.09
Add: Unpresented Receipts		0.00
C/A balance carried forward 18.08.2023		25,326.97
Available funds in C/A		£20,624.88

iii. **Budget Report for July and August 2023. Resolved:** unanimously approved.

Budget Report July 2023

RECEIPTS	To date	Budget	more than budget
Precept	13,872	27,745	-13,873
Council tax support grant	615	1,231	-615
SBC (Concurrent Function Allowance)	754	1,507	-754
SCC Minor Highways Agreement	2,662	2,200	462
Interest Stafford Railway BS A/c	0	250	-250
Interest Teachers A/c	0	200	-200
Interest Hampshire Trust	36	75	-39
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0
Grants	11,211	0	11,211
Misc. Receipts (e.g. VAT reclaim & wayleaves)	12,369	45	12,324
Total income	£41,519	£33,253	£ 8,266

PAYMENTS	To date	Budget	Under / Over budget
Staff costs	6,996	15,050	8,054
Office costs	2,283	3,492	1,209
Maintenance costs	3,627	11,400	7,773
Additional maintenance	-	600	600
Play Area	-	590	590
Capital purchases	-	-	0
Community support	-	1,565	1,565
Projects	-	700	700
Total Expenditure	£12,906	£33,397	£20,491

Budget Report August 2023

RECEIPTS	To date	Budget	more than budget
Precept	13,872	27,745	-13,873
Council tax support grant	615	1,231	-615
SBC (Concurrent Function Allowance)	754	1,507	-754
SCC Minor Highways Agreement	2,662	2,200	462
Interest Stafford Railway BS A/c	0	250	-250
Interest Teachers A/c	0	200	-200
Interest Hampshire Trust	36	75	-39
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0
Grants	11,211	0	11,211
Misc. Receipts (e.g. VAT reclaim & wayleaves)	12,369	45	12,324
Total income	£41,519	£33,253	£ 8,266

PAYMENTS	To date	Budget	Under / Over budget
Staff costs	8,298	15,050	6,752
Office costs	2,808	3,492	684
Maintenance costs	6,141	11,400	5,259
Additional maintenance	-	600	600
Play Area	-	590	590
Capital purchases	-	-	0
Community support	120	1,565	1,445
Projects	-	700	700
Total Expenditure	£17,367	£33,397	£16,030

23/112 Reports from other Meetings

- i. **Environment Group** – The Clerk had asked for quotes for the work to be done at Walton Coppice from 10 companies, but only one had responded. **Resolved:** Cllr Taylor proposed that the quote was used to complete the FiPL grant application and then accepted if the application was successful, seconded by Cllr M Millichap, agreed unanimously. Cllr Luker had spoken to the FiPL Officer at SCC and asked about a grant application for Hollybush Coppice – they were meeting at the Coppice w/c 18 September to discuss it. Cllr Taylor thanked Cllr Luker and the Clerk for all the work done on the application.
- ii. **Village Hall Council of Management** – They had employed a cleaner and a gardener. Nothing was needed from the Parish Council at present.

23/113 Agenda Items for the Next Meeting scheduled for Tuesday 3 October 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Bromage Room, Walton Village Hall

Agenda items agreed were: appointing an AONB representative; parking on Old Croft Road; Planning application for 36 dwellings at land off Old Croft Road; grounds maintenance schedule for 2024.

The meeting closed at 9:02 pm.