*Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the Council: Jennifer Spear*

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**Minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting held on the 04th January 2024 at The Village Hall, Plough Road Great Bentley Colchester CO7 8LG**

Present: Cllr. P. Harry Cllr. B. Herbert Cllr. F. Edwards Cllr. J. Jepson Cllr. K. Plummer Cllr. G. Wright

Cllr. J. Wharton

In attendance: Mrs Jennifer Spear (Clerk) and 6 members of the public.

**Minutes**

**01.223.24 To Receive and approve any Apologies of Absence**

Cllr. R. Taylor and Cllr. P. Dennitts sent their apologies, these were accepted by the council.

As Cllr. P. Dennitts is not in attendance the Vice Chair Cllr. P. Harry will be the acting Chair of the meeting.

**01.224.24 To Receive any declarations of Interest.**

None declared.

**01.225.24 Minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting from the 06th December 2023 meeting (previously circulated) to be approved and signed.**

**Resolved** by Cllr. B. Herbert proposed that the minutes of the Full Parish Council Meeting held on the 06th December 2023 are approved as a correct record, seconded by Cllr. K. Plummer motion carried; these were signed by the Chair.

**01.226.24 Public Participation session with respect to items on the Agenda and matters of mutual interest (time limited to 15 minutes)**

A MOP wanted it to be reiterated that she does like that the public participation session that has been removed from the end of the meeting has not been reinstated even though it has been complained about previously. She advised that it makes her feel unwelcome, and that wants to be able to ask questions on the items that have been discussed during the meeting and would like the council to consider putting this back on the agenda. The clerk advised that the reasons for this are that if MOP are waiting until the end of the meeting to make comments on the resolutions made during the meeting then the council cannot take into consideration MOP’s comments while making a decision so these need to be made at the beginning of the meeting rather than at the end.

The same MOP advised that she is also not happy about the noticeboards being locked as she normally puts things in the noticeboards and removes out of date flyers. The clerk advised that they are more than happy to put notices for community events in the noticeboards on behalf of all the community groups and also they will go into all the noticeboards (6 of them) rather than just the 2 central village ones, furthermore the clerking team are also happy to add to the website so these notices are now getting a much further reaching audience than previously. A MOP stated that actually this was a better way forward than previously due to this.

A MOP wanted to ask about the derelict site at the corner of Birch Ave and if there had been any movement on this. The clerk advised that the enforcement team are still looking into it and she will chase them on the 15th January as last contact was made with the team on the 15th December 2023.

A MOP asked what is happening about the 20-mph lowering of the speed limit outside the school and asked could something like rumble strips be added. Cllr. P. Harry advised that previously the council have been advised that rumble strips are not an option due to the maintenance costs and the noise with the residential houses also being close to the road here. Cllr. G. Wright advised that Sir Benard Jenkins has offered his support for a 20mph speed reduction through the village so we can count on his support for the scheme.

A MOP asked about the circular that came through the door from the railway and what it was. Cllr. K. Plummer advised that it was for the work that was going on overnight to remove the concrete crossing sections for the footpath diversions that have now been closed.

Cllr. P. Harry advised that Plough rd will be shut between the 19th and 23rd February for patching pavement, this hopefully means the path from the railway down to the hairdressers and the Morrella close entrance if they can fit it in due to the difficulty of liaising with the railway.

A MOP asked if there was any Southside Track update, Cllr. G. Wright advised that there is a meeting next week and there will be a report for next months meeting.

**01.227.24 Clerk’s Report**

**To note the report circulated prior to the meeting and answer any questions.**

Cllr. J. Jepson asked about the football club task that was still on there as he thought it had been resolved, the clerk advised it had been and that she would complete it. There were no further questions.

**01.228.24 Finance**

**a) To review the monthly financial bank reconciliation for December.**

It was noted by the council that as of the 20th December 2023 there was a total of £230,015.57 in all of the accounts, the clerk advised that this was not done to the end of the month as normal due to the agenda having to be sent so early due to the Christmas break, and the reconciliation was signed by the Chair.

**b) To discuss and agree to the continued use of Spotler that is no longer a free service at a cost of £14 a month.**

***(This is the system that the clerk uses to log all ongoing tasks and their progress)***

**Resolved** Cllr. G. Wright proposed going ahead and accepting this cost as it clearly supports the clerks work, seconded by Cllr. B. Herbert, all in favour.

**Action – Clerk**

**c) To approve final payments for January in accordance with the 2023/24 budget – please see attached payments list, and to approve 2 councillors to carry out payment checks.**

The Chair asked each Cllr if they had viewed the payments and would be happy to approve them,

Cllr. B. Herbert, agreed.

Cllr. K. Plummer, agreed.

Cllr. F. Edwards agreed but asked where the Flytipping occurred in the parish for the Flytipping invoice, the clerk advised that it was on the A133 roundabout and was a site that was being continually added too. The clerk received more reports about it between Christmas and the New year, as the cost to remove it was £175 she did this under her delegated authority and this would still keep this area as under budget for the financial year. The access gate has now been closed (but not locked) to deter any further Flytipping.

Cllr. J. Jepson, agreed.

Cllr. J. Wharton, agreed.

Cllr. G. Wright, agreed.

Cllr. P. Harry, agreed.

**Resolved** Cllr. P. Harry proposed that Cllr. K. Plummer and Cllr. J. Wharton complete the online payments this month, seconded by Cllr. J. Wharton, all in agreement.

**Action Clerk and Cllr. K. Plummer and Cllr. J. Wharton**

**d) To note the following Receipts:**

£23 Allotment Income - *All allotment payment received*

£95 Great Bentley Pre-School

£190.61 Wayleave

£5320 Easement Payment – Weeley Road Easement

These were noted by the council.

**01.229.24 The Green**

**a) To Discuss the proposed re clay lining of the pond project for the coming year.**

Cllr. B. Herbert advised that this was last carried out in the year 2000 and that was going to last for 10 years so this now needs redoing. The clerk advised the council that are S106 funds available for open space improvements and this could be used to go towards this cost, Cllr. J. Wharton advised that the Friends of the Green also offered financial assistance for this project.

**Resolved** Cllr. G. Wright proposed getting 3 quotes for this work seconded by Cllr. B. Herbert, all in favour.

**Action – Clerk**

**b) To discuss the protection of The Green at the end of Plough Road opposite the Pharmacy.**

The council discussed this at length, which really brought about the wider issues of parking all around the green and the resulting damage to the village green. Cllr. K. Plummer stated that there has never been a highways objection to all the planning that has been approved over the last 5 years this is the end result of the construction traffic damaging these areas, double kerbing won’t work as these lorries can just drive over them and any posts will be knocked over within a month. As Cllr. B. Herbert advised that we are in the middle of a very wet winter and it would be inadvisable to panic and resolve to fix all of these issues separately. The PCSO could be engaged in the short term to put inconsiderate parking tickets on the cars parking very close to the junction which is causing the issues in this particular area.

**Resolved** Cllr. J. Wharton proposed looking into a working group to collectively put all the problem spots together to then engage the parking partnership (suggested by Cllr. A. Goggin) for a solution, seconded by Cllr. P. Harry, all in favour.

**Action – Clerk**

**01.230.24 CCTV Policy**

**To discuss and agree to the new CCTV policy for the Railway Car Park**

Cllr. J. Wharton advised that this is a policy that we have to have by law about the CCTV in the railway car park. The sign in the car park needs to be amended to add the contact details of the parish council clerk so needs an updated sign. Cllr. F. Edwards asked who the data protection officer is, the clerk advised this is herself, also asked how long any images are kept for, Cllr. J. Wharton advised that this depends on the status of the CCTV at the time of the request.

**Resolved** Cllr. J. Jepson proposed implementing the CCTV Policy and updating the signage already in the car park, seconded by Cllr. J. Wharton, all in favour.

**Action – Clerk**

**01.231.24 South Side Track and Mill House Track**

**a) To agree to the maintenance of the levelling of the East End of the South Side Track and the Mill track, carried out under delegated authority.**

**Resolved** Cllr. J. Jepson proposed agreeing to this maintenance as soon as we have the dry weather, seconded by Cllr. G. Wright all in favour.

**Action – Clerk**

**b) To discuss unsanctioned work carried out on the South Side Track on 12th December 2023**

Cllr. B. Herbert advised that he witnessed the work as it began and called the clerk who attended the site with the Chair after much discussion with the owner of the property who was carrying out the work at his own expense it was decided to let the work carry on to test how this area holds up in the meantime (especially as he was putting terram underneath also) at no cost to the council. The clerk advised that the property owner has since sent over the information sheets on the products that he used as this was still an unbound surface. He has also offered his expertise with the Southside track going forward, the clerk will keep an eye on this area over the next few months to see how it holds up.

**01.232.24 Outdoor Fitness Area**

**a) To discuss the report form the Expert Panel of Independent Fitness Experts on the proposed Equipment.**

Cllr. F. Edwards asked what the difference is between the 3 quotations as they are quite a broad range of prices. Cllr. J. Wharton advised that the cheapest one is the same as products installed on other local areas, the mid range one covers the smallest area of the green and the more expensive one has extras added in that we did not ask for but the supplier wanted to give us the option of the extra items if we wanted to add them on. The expert panel did throw up a lot of questions that we had not considered but the report is in the folder.

Cllr. J. Jepson raised a concern that he thought the HAG design looked really large and taking up a large part of the green and preferred the smaller footprint design.

Cllr. B. Herbert didn’t approve to the addition in the first place and doesn’t want to discuss it now.

Cllr. G. Wright wanted to express that he would be guided in his decision by Cllr. J. Wharton as the expert with all the work he has put in because he didn’t feel that he had looked through all the documentation in the folder to make an informed decision.

Cllr. P. Harry stated from the report that they favoured the TGO quotation, with the products in place being able to cater for more residents in a smaller surface area, however HAGs maintenance programme is much better as the products were covered for the first few years which gives budget protection for our precept over the coming years and any uplift in the precept can be built into the precept rather than any large step up. They will repair items within 24 hours and carry items with them to repair on site, they also will cover our play area included in this cost which reduces the current spend that we have on the play area.

Cllr. J. Jepson asked about the process of the deed of variation, the clerk advised that at this time the deed of variation is not needed at this time as the S106 officer is putting the proposals through to spend the money at this time.

**b) To discuss and select a provider for the new Equipment.**

Cllr. J. Wharton proposed to accept the contract from TGO as recommended by the Independent panel, this proposal did not gain a seconder at this time, due to the council agreeing that a decision did not need to be made at this time as the S106 funds have not yet been released and they feel they would like a site meeting before the next meeting and they all need to look through the documentation as provided by Cllr. J. Wharton.

**Resolved** Cllr. G. Wright proposed deferring the decision to the next meeting, seconded by Cllr K. Plummer, amended by Cllr. J. Jepson that the Cllrs make a date to go and meet at the site, this amendment was accepted by Cllr. G. Wright, Cllr. B. Herbert abstained, all the rest in favour, motion carried.

**Action – Clerk and all the council (except Cllr. B. Herbert) for a site meeting.**

**01.233.24 Tractor**

**a) To discuss and agree to how to sell the old Tractor.**

The clerk advised that an offer has been received for the tractor but also, she has sought advice from other local clerks about the selling of a council asset and it may well be that as it is 40 years old this may well be a collectors item so the advice is to take it to an agricultural auction. Cllr. G. Wright offered to take the tractor free of charge to the auction.

**Resolved** Cllr. G. Wright proposed taking it to Clarke and Simpson auctioneers (our local agricultural auctioneers) with a reserve of the offer that has been made, this was seconded by Cllr. J. Jepson all in favour.

**Action – Clerk and Cllr. G. Wright**

**b) To discuss and agree to the storage of the new tractor.**

The clerk advised that ACC have no storage available at the moment but that a MOP recommended that the owners of Hall Farm may be able to store it at a cost, but she has not been able to get hold of them. Cllr. G. Wright has offered to store temporarily in the meantime if we need too get it on site but Does are happy to hold for the time being.

**Resolved** decision deferred to the next meeting when the clerk should have costs in place.

**01.234.24 The Environmental Working Group**

**a) To note the report from the Environmental Working Group**

The Environmental Working Group did not meet this month, so there is no report.

**01.235.24 The Green Working Group**

**a) To note the report from the Green Working Group**

The Green Working Group did not meet this month, so there is no report.

**01.236.24 Planning/Housing**

**a) 23/01699/OUT**

Land to The South of Colchester Road Frating Essex

Outline Planning Application (Access to be considered with all other matters reserved) for new commercial premises.

**Resolved** Cllr. B. Herbert advised that under the local plan there is to be no commercial development within the parish of Great Bentley, therefore proposed that the parish council object based on this, seconded by Cllr F. Edwards all in favour.

**Action – Clerk**

**b) 23/01745/NDPNOT**

Penguin Random House Distribution Colchester Road Frating Colchester

Prior Approval Application under Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for installation of solar panels.

**Resolved –** this was noted by the council.

**c) 23/01777/NDPNOT**

Plough Road Centre Plough Road Great Bentley Essex

Application under Part 14, Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for solar panels to the roofs of Northgate and Southgate House.

**Resolved –** this was noted by the council**.**

At this time Cllr. P. Harry wanted to advise the council that application 23/01312/FUL has been approved during the Christmas break and in the application, it was acknowledged that there is a bus stop outside the property.

**01.237.24 Reports from District and County Councils** (ECC Alan Goggin, TDC Lynda McWilliams)

*Reports circulated prior to the meeting.*

Cllr. A. Goggin confirmed that in February 2020 there was some money sent to ECC for a bus stop at Heckford Road but there is no bus to use this at this location (£12,000 16th April 2020 by Gohomes), but this needs to be located within Essex County Council once this has been found we can use it for any bus shelter/ stop within the parish of Great Bentley.

In regard to the Plough Road Highway Drainage Problem Highways have said that it is not as serious an issue as other issues they are dealing with so they will just inspect it again in the future. Cllr. P. Harry asked if we can get a lorry to come and clear out those drains to try and at least relieve them. At this point a MOP advised that this is a serious issue that is causing the school children to have to walk out into the road around the flooding that keeps occurring in that area. The council appealed to Cllr. Goggin to ask him to push this issue because although Highways don’t see this as a serious problem it really is and the council want him to push this. Cllr. Goggin has asked if the parish council can send him a full reason with technical information as to why this is a major issue and needs to be looked at urgently so he can progress this for us.

Cllr. L. McWilliams advised that she is back on the planning committee as of this time and also on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which covers community leadership and education.

**01.238.24 Council Reports:**

**a) Footpath report**

Circulated prior to the meeting

This report was noted by the council.

The clerk advised that now the assistant clerk is finding her feet the reports are now being actioned and today the reported items were being cross referenced to double check the progress online. Cllr. K. Plummer asked about the footpath diversion and also advised that the Cala homes heras fence has been blown down and the footpath is now unsafe so asked the clerk to contact Cala homes.

**b) Caretaker’s Report**

Circulated prior to the meeting

This report was circulated prior to the meeting.

**c) PCSO Report**

Circulated prior to the meeting

Cllr. J. Jepson states that it is entitled Great Bentley Crime report however this just covers all of the offences recorded in Great Bentley rather than what the PCSO has been dealing with on a monthly basis.

Also would it be possible to find out how many fixed penalty notices have they given out in the village on a monthly basis, to help support the parking issues. The clerk advised that she has received the timesheet for the PCSO this month for the first time and is beginning to look into the PCSO’s activities within the village.

**01.239.24 Highways & Transport Reports:**

*Circulated prior to the meeting.*

Cllr. P. Harry There are roadworks planned in the village, Heckfords road on the 15 – 17th January, South Heath road 1 – 2nd February and 19th-23rd February plough road the pavement from the railway to the salon, although these are listed as road closures they may only be partial ones and have traffic lights in situ.

**01.240.24 Training/Events**

**a) Reports on attended events**

None this month.

**b) Nominations for new events**

Cllr. P. Harry and Cllr. P. Dennitts are attending the ECC Local Mineral Plans Review at the end of the month.

**01.241.24 Information Exchange/Items for next agenda**

Green Corner

Catkin Cottage

Tractor Storage

Southside track Maintenance

Public speaking participation session

Working Party to deal with the parking issue around the green

**01.242.24 To confirm date of the next Parish Council Meeting**

The next Council meeting is booked for 7:00pm on Thursday 01st February 2024.

Wednesday 10th at 19:00 at Admirals Farm

Wednesday 10th at 10:00 Finance Committee Meeting

There being no further business the chair closed the meeting at 21:01

…………………………………………………………………..signed………………………………………………….date