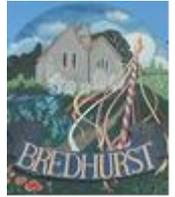


BREDHURST PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held at Bredhurst CE Primary School, on Wednesday 6th September 2017 at 6.30pm

Present: Cllr Vanessa Jones (Chair), Cllr Nichola Carr (Vice-Chair), Cllr Steve Bowring, Cllr David Hales, Cllr Derek Butler (MBC), Bex Ratchford (Clerk)

Public: 37

56. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Greer.

57. Declarations of interests

Cllrs had no interests to declare.

58. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2017

The minutes were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed and dated by the Chair.

59. Cllr resignation

Cllr Louise Ferne has resigned due to the 'abhorrent behaviour and correspondence received from certain individuals within the parish'. Her letter of resignation was read out and cllrs expressed their sadness and thanks to Louise.

60. Police briefing

PCSO Adlington was not present and no briefing was available.

The meeting adjourned for a short public session. A member of the public had asked the village hall committee for a list of dates and times of events where alcohol would be sold. She had attended on these occasions and observed children in the field and play area but no adults and no alcohol. The gate for the holiday playscheme was felt to be necessary for safety reasons. The public meeting had been called as a resident felt not enough information had been given by BPC. The resident concerned felt she had been misquoted by BPC over the 'investigation'. A request from the playgroup children to keep the gate was presented to the council. The absence of a second public session from the agenda was queried and it was responded that there is no legal obligation to include a public session and it is down to the Chair's discretion. Questions were raised about the difference between a parish council and a village hall committee and it was responded that they are different bodies governed by different requirements. It was hoped that BPC would take representation from the public and felt that more open discussion would get more people wanting to be involved. A resident commented that BPC seeks to include people and takes residents' points of view on board and cllrs were thanked for this.

61. Matters arising (for information only)

- a. AP1: an email had been received detailing the new PCSO system – less PCSOs are available and each therefore is dealing with a larger area and less able to attend meetings. There is a

- website which provides crime figures and it was agreed that the clerk would obtain these prior to each meeting in future.
- b. AP2: the weed killing has now taken place but it seems they sprayed outside the allotments in error. **Action 1: Clerk to contact contractor and confirm areas for weed killing.**
 - c. AP3: agenda item 62.
 - d. AP4: Cllr Bowring attended the Mayor's Garden Party.

62. Playing field

The clerk reported that the results of the consultation plus all additional comments had been made available to cllrs, with names and addresses redacted. There were 153 responses out of a possible 319. 102 were in favour of renewing the lease, 35 were against and 11 were unsure. 40 were in favour of erecting a fence, 88 were against and 22 unsure. If BPC feels the lease renewal is dependent on the erection of the fence, 59 were in favour of this, 52 were against and 23 were unsure. There were also 68 comments received and two letters, the latter of which will be responded to individually. The main issues raised in the comments were:

- The playground is important to the village but there is no need to increase council tax
- Concerns over the management of the village hall
- Concerns over access to the field if a fence and gates were to be erected
- Concerns over a fence due to vandalism, anti-social behaviour, unaccompanied children, village hall users not being a problem
- The lease renewal does not depend on the erection of a fence

It was noted that the increase in council tax would not be to pay for the fence, but to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the field and play equipment. The increase was advised by the clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer as in the past the funding has been taken out of reserves but should be budgeted for in future. Residents with concerns over the village hall management were advised to contact the village hall committee directly. It was reiterated that the proposed gates would only be locked in exceptional circumstances and the action would be subject to a policy agreed by the council. Cllrs were advised to fully consider residents' concerns over a fence but also their responsibilities as a landowner with a duty of care and to decide whether the apparent risk was sufficient to warrant the erection of a fence.

Cllr Jones highlighted Savills requirement to remove the play equipment should the lease not be renewed and the need to budget to replace play equipment over a ten or fifteen year lease if it were renewed. Instead of raising the precept by the suggested £3000 per year, she suggested looking at other funding options or removing equipment rather than replacing it when necessary. She noted that the height of the vehicular gate was yet to be determined and that BPC had never asked for the whole field to be fenced as suggested by a resident. She suggested delaying the installation of the pedestrian gate, taking advice from the fencing contractor regarding the vehicular gates and installing signage regarding the terms of use of the field, such as 'no alcohol, no team/club/business use', etc. She felt the safety of children would not be compromised as the field is not visible from the main body of the hall, but only the kitchen. She explained that the council was now at liberty to disclose that BPC would be able to meet the cost of the fence as a result of a drastically reduced rental charge from Savills. The play inspector who has carried out previous annual inspections for BPC had raised no concerns regarding a fence but suggested installing signs as she agreed with BPC's concerns. She highlighted the need to consider the legal guidance relating to landowners and liabilities.

Cllr Carr distributed photos of village hall hirers using the field and the broken padlock. She noted that parish council members and village hall committee members could change over

the course of a new lease so the boundaries need to be clearly defined, particularly as residents seem to be unclear about who is responsible for each area. She noted that each leaseholder needs to be accountable for their own space and the risk to children needs to be taken on board, as the council has a legal obligation to make the area safe for children.

Cllr Bowring felt it would be a shame not to renew the lease and noted the available break clauses. He felt there could be a conflict with people drinking in the hall's patio area and if there was a barrier between the play area and the hall children would be screened from this. He noted the need to remember the legal responsibilities and agreed it would make a clearly segregated area but felt it would be wise to hold fire on erecting a fence for the present.

Cllr Hales felt it important to renew the lease and to erect a visual barrier to segregate the areas but felt there should be no new pedestrian gate at the present time.

Cllr Jones expressed concern over the vandalised padlock as if a child had been injured it would have been the council's responsibility. Even one incident was one too many. Cllr Carr commented that the access points shown on Savills site plan show the pedestrian access to the side of the church shop and the vehicular access through the five bar gate. There is no access shown from the rear of the hall directly into the toddlers' play area.

Cllr Carr proposed renewing the lease, installing a 6ft close boarded fence at the rear of the village hall as suggested in the consultation, but leaving the two current gates in situ, dependent on advice from the contractor as to the condition of the five bar gate. This was seconded by Cllr Jones and **agreed**. It was **agreed** to progress the repairs to the play equipment at a cost of £325 as per minute 10 (meeting held on 3rd May 2017). **Action 2: Clerk to progress repairs.** It was **agreed** to ask the fencing contractors to requote as the pedestrian gate is no longer required and to ask advice regarding the five bar gate. **Action 3: Clerk and one cllr to meet with contractors and obtain new quotes.** It was **agreed** to look at options for signage, especially if signs endorsed by MBC can be obtained. **Action 4: Clerk to investigate signage options.**

63. Planning

- a. 16/506195 – Forge Lodge, Forge Lane – outline application for residential development (access only being sought) – appeal lodged – noted.
- b. 17/503450 – Horseshoes, The Street – replacement of window frames – it was **agreed** not to comment.
- c. 17/503953 – The Nursery Restaurant, Dunn Street – change of use from office to D1 use of one office at this address to be used as an Ultrasound Studio for pregnant women on a part-time basis – it was **agreed** to comment with no objection but to note that, contrary to the planning application, the business has been in operation for some months already and the property is not on mains drainage. **Action 5: Clerk to comment.**
- d. 17/502100 – Bredhurst Garden Centre – demolition of existing wedding venue, office and other commercial buildings and erection of 4 detached dwellings with associated parking, access, infrastructure and landscaping works – approved – noted.

64. Finance

- a. The completed external audit has been received with one 'except for' matter (this means it needs raising but is no cause for concern). The accounting system has been changed from income and expenditure to receipts and payments as this is a simpler system and more suitable for a council of this size. The figures for the previous year should have been

changed to the new system and noted as 'restated' on the annual return form. This will make no difference to the arrangements for next year – BPC will no longer be subject to external audit as it has a turnover of less than £25,000 per year and therefore is subject to the Transparency Code instead.

- b. The financial statement and bank reconciliation were reviewed and accepted. The Parish Services Scheme grant has been received, as has the money claimed from the Transparency Fund.

| Account | Balance as of 31/08/17 |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Current Account | 270.55 |
| Reserve Account | 22,855.60 |
| Total | 23,126.15 |

- c. The payment to Savills for the field rental was not agreed as the new lease will need to be signed and the amount due will be different.
- d. Payments were **agreed** as follows:

| Cheque | Payment | Amount |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| BACS | Bex Ratchford – wages and office rental (July and August) | 844.44 |
| 1418 | Bex Ratchford – expenses (107.59) and extra hours (379.98) | 487.57 |
| 1419 | MBC – allotment rent | 5.00 |
| 1420 | Amenity Weed Care – weed killing | 312.00 |
| 1421 | PKF Littlejohn – external audit | 120.00 |
| 1422 | Landscape Services – grounds maintenance (first half) | 177.08 |
| 1423 | Croft Casting – AONB sign (covered by insurance) | 1752.00 |

65. Reports from parish councillors

Cllr Bowring had attended the Mayor's Garden Party and found it most enjoyable. **Action 6: Clerk to thank Mayor's office.** Cllr Carr had attended the village show and will be on the committee next year. She encouraged residents to get involved. Cllr Jones reported that two Kent County Cllrs (one a cabinet member) will be visiting Bredhurst this month to view the area for the Old Chalk New Downs Project which it is hoped will provide more funding for Bredhurst. Cllrs Bowring and Carr will attend the Maidstone KALC meeting on Monday.

66. Reports from borough and county councillors (if present)

Cllr Butler reported that the Local Plan should be finally agreed by the end of September and will take effect immediately.

67. Correspondence

All correspondence was noted.

- The meeting held with KALC to discuss HGVs was successful and MPs will be looking at possible options for the future.
- An enquiry had been received regarding postal addresses for Dunn Street/Dunn Street Road and had been dealt with by Cllr Jones as the clerk was on annual leave. It was noted that the electoral roll lists both addresses.
- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan survey will be forwarded to residents. **Action 7: Clerk to forward.**
- The Park & Ride consultation has been forwarded to residents.

The meeting adjourned for a short public session. The streets have been cleaned recently but the bridge and Kemsley Street Road weren't done. **Action 8: Cllr Carr to contact KCC.** Further comments were received regarding the playing field and the fence.

68. Playing field lease terms (closed session)

It was **agreed** to renew the lease according to Option 1 (10 years). **Action 9: Clerk to inform Savills.**

69. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 8.24pm.

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 4th October 2017** at 6.30pm.

Signed.....

Date.....