

Minutes of the Meeting of Brickhill Parish Council held virtually on Thursday 7th January 2021 commencing at 7.30pm.

Present:

Cllrs Fitzpatrick, Holloway, Green, Blakeman, Durham, Johns, Charles Royden, Rider, Corinne Royden, Grant, Reeve, Jarman-Webb, Rani, Borough Cllr Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant, Rebecca Stockman (LivShare Housing and Consultancy), Tim Pain (Verve Developments), Paul Hunt (CEO of YMCA) and the Clerk (Mrs S Bottoms) were in attendance.

Absent:

Cllr Ward and Borough Cllr S Moon.

Summary of the meeting: -

Table 1 – The Minutes

Item	Description	Action by
1.	<p>Apologies for Absence: Cllr Borough Cllr S Moon.</p> <p>Resignation of Tim Retout: Cllr Fitzpatrick noted the resignation of Tim Retout. He was thanked on behalf of the Parish Council for his work on behalf of the residents of Brickhill during his time on the Parish Council. The Clerk had contacted Bedford Borough Council to start the process of filling the vacancy.</p>	Clerk

Item	Description	Action by
2.	<p>Declarations of interest in items on the agenda:</p> <p>i) To receive written requests for a dispensation: None received.</p> <p>ii) To consider any requests for a dispensation:</p>	
3.	<p>To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5th November 2020:</p> <p>The minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Presentation by Verve Developments (30 mins maximum):</p> <p>Verve Developments in partnership with YMCA gave the Parish Council a presentation about a potential new housing scheme at Bedford Heights which is aimed at providing accommodation to local people (18-35 years), on the housing register, able to live independently and with an annual income below £28,000.</p>	
5.	<p>Public Open Session (15 mins):</p> <p>None.</p>	

Item	Description	Action by
6.	<p>Financial Matters:</p> <p>To consider and agree action on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) To approve bank reconciliations and any accounts for payment: <p>It was resolved to approve the bank reconciliations and the accounts for payment listed in the table that appears at the end of these minutes.</p> ii) To agree appointment of Mr John Caves as internal auditor for the 2020-21 accounts: <p>This was resolved. The Clerk will inform Mr Caves.</p> iii) To review the internal audit procedure and coverage: <p>The Clerk reported that when Mazars (the external auditors) completed the audit for 19-20, they found no issues with the accounts but in the completion letter the following comment was included.</p> <p>Minor scope for improvement in 2020/21</p> <p>The Council's only Internal Audit report in 2019/20 was the internal audit page included in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). In future, the Council should provide an internal audit report which sets out the work performed and relevant findings in greater detail and provides a clear overall conclusion. It should also explain any areas not covered by Internal Audit in the financial year as required by the notes on the AGAR.</p> 	Clerk

Item	Description	Action by
	<p>As parish councillors are aware, the borough council accidentally credited the precept twice to the Parish Council bank account which meant that income and expenditure for 2019-20 was £122,500 more than it should have been. Despite being aware of the reason for the additional turnover, Mazars still asked for additional information including any interim audit reports carried out during the year. The Clerk had responded that apart from Cllr Ward carrying out random checks during the year, no further audits were carried out. There had never been any issues raised in the previous years either by the internal auditor or the external auditor with the accounts. Information had been sent explaining why certain areas had not been covered by the internal auditor namely petty cash (because the Parish Council does not run a petty cash account) and also the section for parishes who were exempt from external audit.</p> <p>The Clerk proposed to deal with this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the risk assessment covering the financial controls which are carried out and recording any changes and amendments to them. • Formalising the meetings, she has with Cllr Ward and producing a written report with copies made available to the internal and external auditor • Formalising the appointment letter to John Caves and making him aware of the comment provided by Mazars <p>Details of all this will be forwarded to Mazars with the 2020-21 accounts. It was resolved to accept these proposals.</p>	Clerk

Item	Description	Action by
	<p>iv) Grant application from the Bedford Daycare Hospice for £500: It was resolved to agree to give a grant of £500. It was further resolved that the Parish Council would review the Grant Application Criteria which is currently used at the February Parish Council meeting</p> <p>v) To agree the budget for 2021-22: Cllr Fitzpatrick presented the draft budget which was then discussed. He noted that the Parish Council, as of tomorrow, were taking over responsibility for the Mowsbury Walk play area which will add to the future expenditure commitments of the Parish Council. At the November meeting, £20,000 was committed to starting the process of upgrading the play area. £4,000 had been allocated in the 20-21 budget but it may well be that only about £500 will be spent from this financial year. Cllr Fitzpatrick proposed moving any remaining monies into the Waveney Green Reserve and to add a further £5,000 into the for further works to the play area. The plans for progressing the upgrade of the play area will be discussed under 8. below. The adverse impact on the finances of Brickhill residents, from amongst other factors the COVID situation, means that there are less households paying council tax which reduces the tax base for 2021-22. This is a similar situation for many of the parishes across the Borough. This will have an impact on the possible tax charge to our residents. The budget was then considered in detail. With regards expenditure, it was noted that the COVID situation makes it difficult to undertake a number of traditional activities e.g. Gathering on the Green and children's activities. But it was hoped that by March 2022, it will be possible to host the Spring Tea for the senior citizens. It is difficult to know what will happen with the printing of the newsletter and distribution and hall hire but these have been budgeted for as hopefully things will start to get back to normal again later in the year. It was intended to progress the Neighbourhood Development Plan and whilst the Parish Council had received a grant to cover consultancy costs, there may be other expenses to be funded from the Parish Council budget. With regards the income for 2021-22, there may be some income</p>	Clerk

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	<p>from newsletter advertising assuming the newsletter is produced again later in the year and FIT income from the solar panels on the Brickhill Community Centre will continue to be received. There may be some CIL monies but nothing is certain in the short term. Following discussion and taking into account the reduced tax base and a wish to minimise any increase in council tax charges on residents many of whom were financially suffering during this COVID crisis, it was resolved by a majority of 9:4 to reduce the precept slightly from 122,500 as in 20-21 to £121,500 for 21-22 and to fund any deficit from undesignated reserves. This will translate to a 1.7p per week increase or 2.62% annual increase.</p> <p>vi) To agree the precept request for 2021-22: The request for £121,500 would be submitted to the Borough Council.</p>	Clerk
7.	<p>To receive reports from the Borough Councillors:</p> <p>A report had been received from the Brickhill councillors and the Clerk would put a copy on the website. Earlier in the meeting, Cllr Rani had raised the state of the wooden animals on the play areas across Woodlands Park. Those play areas are under the control of Bedford Borough Council. Cllr Rani was of the view that Woodlands Park was looking very run down and work needed to be done. Borough Cllr Martin-Moran-Bryant agreed to liaise with Cllr Rani and to take those issues up with Borough Council officers. Cllr Blakeman raised with the Brickhill Borough Councillors his concerns about the traffic lights at Brickhill Drive/Kimbolton Road/Putnoe Lane. Cllr Royden said that louvres had been fitted and the lights had passed a safety audit. Cllr Blakeman said further action was needed as the lights controlling the traffic heading north on Kimbolton Road at the Brickhill Drive junction were not in the eyeline of the driver stopped and waiting to set off, rather above their eyeline. Drivers were therefore focusing on the lights controlling a different junction. A similar problem occurs with the lights heading south down Kimbolton Road, at the</p>	Borough Cllr Martin-Moran-Bryant.

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	<p>junction with Putnoe Lane, where the subsequent lights (at the junction of Brickhill Drive) are still causing some problems with south-bound drivers. It was resolved to contact the Highways Department and raise the concern.</p>	Clerk
8.	<p>To agree a plan and timescale for the upgrade of the Mowsbury Walk play area:</p> <p>The Clerk reported that the lease will be signed by Bedford Borough Council tomorrow (8th January) after which the Parish Council will take over responsibility for the play area.</p> <p>Approximately a year ago, Bedford Borough Council received a grant for the re-painting of play equipment across all their play areas and so the metal fencing and equipment on Mowsbury Walk was painted as part of that. Despite this, the play area is looking very tired and in need of a serious upgrade. The area under the equipment is covered with bark which is full of weeds and large sections of the wooden edging is missing.</p> <p>The formal annual inspection of the equipment takes place in February and the Borough Council has agreed to allow the next inspection to go ahead and to forward a copy once completed. In terms of equipment, the junior and baby swings and the large net are in need of replacement. Given the time taken to acquire the lease, it is important to see progress as soon as possible.</p> <p>In February 2020, the A & OS Committee agreed to purchase 2 new pieces of equipment from Proludic and accepted the most competitive quotation for the installation and surfacing from RPM. Following that the Clerk had also asked for a quotation from RPM and Proludic for works to the Mowsbury Walk play area. The suggestion was to replace the junior swings and possibly the baby swings with a new set and the net with a piece of equipment called a “hip hop”. Rubber mulch would be used to replace the bark which will provide a superior surface. Wet pour is the best quality</p>	

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	<p>surface but would significantly increase costs so rubber mulch is an acceptable compromise. The quotation to install the equipment and to replace all the surfacing with rubber mulch will exceed the funds already allocated to the project so decisions will need to be taken as to priorities.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the Clerk, Cllrs Fitzpatrick and Rani to decide how to prioritise the allocated funds. • For the Clerk to refresh with RPM and Proludic the prices and quotations received in November 2019. • To organise a site meeting as soon as possible with the relevant parties. • The Clerk will report back with an update at the February meeting. 	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Cllrs Fitzpatrick and Rani</p>
9.	<p>To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Development Plan and agree further action:</p> <p>Cllr Fitzpatrick said that there had been no progress of late. A major challenge remains around how to engage with residents during the current COVID crisis. Communication via paper means still remains the best way to undertake community engagement and this is currently difficult. Cllr Fitzpatrick hopes to resume work on the plan in February. The Parish Council is currently in possession of a £10,000 grant from Groundworks UK. Any not spent within the financial year will need to be returned but he understood further amounts can be applied for in the next financial year.</p>	<p>Cllr Fitzpatrick</p>

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10.	<p>Outstanding matters from previous meetings:</p> <p>The list was reviewed:</p> <p>i) Police Attendance at a future Parish Council meeting: Cllr Jarman- Webb had contacted the Clerk about the increase car crime in Woodlands Park and whether a police representative could attend this meeting. Given that this was the budget meeting and there was already a commitment to Verve to attend, time would have been very tight. The Clerk had suggested perhaps a separate meeting. Cllr Fitzpatrick said that PC Hoffi Pursey from Kempston was looking at car crime which is an issue across other parts of Brickhill and not just Woodlands Park and that she was trying to find some dates to have a meeting with her, other relevant persons and parish councillors. She had agreed to come back with some dates. Cllr Fitzpatrick suggested that this meeting should be held before opening it up to the general public. Cllr Rani reported that an individual had been arrested in Kempston who she thought was the perpetrator of the recent activity in Woodlands Park.</p>	
11.	<p>Correspondence: List circulated separately:</p> <p>None.</p>	
12.	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <p>Thursday 4th February 2021, at 7.30pm on Zoom. Joining details will be attached to the February agenda and available on the Parish Council website.</p>	

Table 2 - Bank Reconciliations for Approval (see item above)

Payee	Reference	Amount Paid	Transaction Details
P Chester & Sons Ltd	BACS 61	£ 7,468.48	Pump and Fan Replacement BCC
Chris Horne Gardens Ltd	BACS62	£ 198.00	Mow Allotment
Bedford Borough Council	DD	£ 3,598.03	Salaries Nov
Associated Telecom Solutions	DD	£ 14.77	Telephone Charges
Chris Horne Gardens Ltd	BACS 63	£ 186.00	Wildflower Meadow WG
Bedford Borough Council	DD	£ 3,598.03	Salaries Dec
Associated Telecom Solutions	DD	£ 15.98	Telephone
Wave	DD	£ 564.51	Water Charges
S Bottoms	BACS 69	£ 52.78	Zoom and Expenses
NPower	BACS 71	£ 13.38	Electricity for Fountain
ICO	101239	£ 40.00	Data Registration
Mazars	BACS 65	£ 720.00	External Audit

Payee	Reference	Amount Paid	Transaction Details
Otis Ltd	BACS 66	£ 607.88	Lift Service
Bedford Borough Council	BACS 67	£ 1,447.88	Grounds Maintenance WG
NPower	BACS 68	£ 34.02	Electricity for Fountain
SLCC	BACS 70	£ 233.00	SLCC Membership
	Total Payments	£ 18,922.46	

Approved by

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 Chairman
 4th February 2021