

BLEADON PARISH COUNCIL

www.bleadonparishcouncil.co.uk



Annual Parish Meeting – 9th April 2018

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of held in the Coronation Hall, Coronation Road, Bleadon on Monday 9th April 2018 at 7.00pm when the following business was transacted:

PRESENT Cllr Steve Hartree (Chairman), Cllr Mary Sheppard (Vice Chairman), Cllr Ray Bleazard, Marian Barber (Clerk to the Parish Council) and over 70 members of the public.

Apologies were received from Cllr Terry Porter, PCSO Aisha Mitchell and three electors.

WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave particular thanks to the leaflet distributors and to Jim Baines for the PA system. The minutes of last year's meeting were approved at the Parish Council meeting on 22nd May 2017 and copies were available in the room. Refreshments were provided at no cost to the Parish Council.

VALUED CITIZEN AWARDS

The Chairman announced the presentation of the first Valued Citizen Awards to Mr Chris Cudlipp. Chris has organised Bleadon Horticultural Society and the Society's Spring and Summer Flower Shows for over 40 years, an outstanding contribution to village life. The Chairman presented a framed certificate to Mr Cudlipp.

Later in the meeting (at 8.35pm) the second Valued Citizen Award was presented to Ms Joanne Jones. Until recently Jo was the bookings officer for the Coronation Halls, providing an excellent service and continuity for 35 years, a valuable contribution to village life. The Chairman presented a framed certificate to Ms Jones.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Parish Council has continued to protect the parish boundary by examining all appropriate planning applications, and has endeavoured to maintain the environment and Bleadon as an attractive place in which to live. The Parish Council continues to administer allotments, the play area, a summer plant up, public conveniences and other services for the benefit of parishioners.

Responses to consultation documents from the Government and North Somerset Council are made, as are those to planning applications relating to Bleadon. Should any planning application be made in respect of the land between the A370 and Bleadon Road, then a response will be made in accord with the views of the majority of parishioners. As you will be aware, the Parish Council is the only body that has a statutory and constitutional right to be consulted with regard to planning matters. Yet another reason to have a fully constituted Council.

The Ranger, employed by the Council, has undertaken a multitude of tasks to enhance the appearance and facilities of the parish, and the Council's thanks go to him for his enthusiastic approach to his duties.

The Parish Council has been represented at meetings with Marshalls, at which concerns and suggestions of parishioners regarding the quarry are discussed. The Council has also been represented at meetings of the Coronation Hall Management Committee and the Youth Club Management Committee.

Public participation at all meetings of the Council and its committees is encouraged as Councillors wish to hear of the concerns and aspirations of the residents of Bleadon. However, there is a prescribed method by which parishioners can participate in the appropriate section of Council meetings, and all are encouraged to comply with this procedure. The Council endeavours to raise with the appropriate bodies

issues of concern to parishioners and, always, to improve communication between the Council and other organisations.

In the current economic climate the Parish Council keeps alert to the possibility of functions being transferred from Government and North Somerset Council, and always seeks to protect services provided to the residents of Bleadon. The Parish Council wishes to thank North Somerset Councillor Terry Porter for his attendance at Council meetings, for his advice and for representing the Council's views to North Somerset.

The past year has seen resignations from Councillors and a Clerk; however, a new Clerk, Marian, has been appointed and we all wish her well in this essential post. Tremendous thanks go also to Kevin Barrett who undertook the role of Temporary Clerk from the resignation of Maria Bird until the appointment of Marian.

With the Parish Council currently comprising of only three Councillors, so only just quorate, there is a desperate need for suitable parishioners to come forward to join the Council. A dramatic illustration of the difficulties facing a just quorate Council is in relation to planning - should a planning application be sent to the Parish Council by North Somerset Council in which a Parish Councillor has an interest, then such an application could not be discussed by the Parish Council!

I thank all Parish Councillors, both past and present, for their work and support through what has been a difficult year; my especial thanks to Dave Chinn his work in relation to the Youth Club, and to Richard Dobson for his excellent work in exploring Neighbourhood Plans. Parish Councillors are volunteers who give of their time and efforts on behalf of the parish and who, at times, have a difficult job to do. My thanks go also to members of the public who faithfully attend Council meetings and so express an interest in what goes on in Bleadon.

Finally, I wish all parishioners well for the future in their lives in this beautiful village.

PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Bleazard read the report submitted by the Chairman of the Planning Committee.

The Planning Committee was reinstated in November 2017, for a number of reasons:

- Planning applications were being considered in general meetings. There had been an increase in the number of applications being made, some requiring detailed discussion, and it was felt that it was important for time to be allocated to allow public participation. Consequently, insufficient time remained for the general business of the Parish Council.
- It was felt that more time was required for Councillors to scrutinise and discuss applications and consider the available information fully.
- The Parish Council was receiving an increasing number of requests to respond to planning related consultations, which needed to be reviewed and agreed.
- Councillors who had a current significant conflict of interest on planning matters would be able to opt out of the process.

The committee was to consider all related planning matters for example:

- Site allocations
- Settlement boundary
- North Somerset Council planning updates and consultations
- Information from organisations such as CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England)
- Reports from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group when it was established.

It was agreed that minor planning applications would be considered in the general meetings, and the planning committee would only be convened in response to a heavy workload and/or planning applications having a significant impact.

It is important to remember that North Somerset Council is the planning authority responsible for planning decisions within Bleadon Parish and is the only body that can make decisions. Bleadon Parish Council is empowered and entitled to make an observation or comment on an application to North Somerset Council on behalf of the Parish.

The first meeting was held on Monday 6th November. It is worth noting that at this meeting two applications were considered that subsequently raised a number of questions over the application of current planning thinking by the NSC planning team. The applications were:

1. Land adjacent to Rivermead, Purn Way – Outline application for a single dwelling house and garage

It was unanimously resolved to object to this planning application for a number of reasons access, high visual impact, wildlife and ecology impact, safety and most importantly it was outside of the settlement boundary.

2. Land off Bridgwater Road - Erection of a replacement workshop/store building (retrospective)

A site inspection had been carried out and there appeared to be no grounds for refusal, and it was unanimously resolved not to object to this planning application

When the final decisions were received they were the opposite to the recommendations made by the Parish Council. Regarding the building off the A370; it became evident that NSC's objections were linked to historical use of the site.

The importance of clarifying the position on settlement boundaries is fully appreciated, particularly as NSC Planners notified Bleadon PC that they will be reviewing settlement boundaries/hierarchy this Spring. In view of this review and these recent decisions on outline planning at Rivermead and the replacement outbuilding on the A370, the Council plan to meet the NSC planners soon to fully understand their thinking on settlement boundaries.

It had been hoped that starting the Neighbourhood Plan process at the same time as various planning consultations and updates are taking place would enable a closer discussion with the NSC team.

The Parish Council receives a large number of consultation requests which require a high level of commitment from the team, at the time of this meeting these were:

- Burnham and Highbridge Area Neighbourhood Plan.
- North Somerset's draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA).
- Final draft of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP).
- North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Guidance: Draft Supplementary Planning Document.
- North Somerset Draft Local Planning Application Requirements – Part 1 document.

All were fully considered, discussed and responses made as required.

Finally a big thank you to the Parish Council team for all of the work done in reviewing planning application documentation, carrying out site visits, reporting back to the Council and going through often very detailed consultation documents.

Bleadon faces a difficult future as Government pressure to increase the delivery of housing increases. It is really important that everyone in the community works together to make the best use of skills, resources, knowledge, contacts and opportunities.

FINANCE SUMMARY 2017-2018

These figures are unaudited, taken from the accounting package, and therefore draft. The table below was shown on the screen at the meeting and copies were available in the room.

There has been a turnover in staff during the year with four individuals attending to the accounts. It is therefore a pleasure to report that the accounting package and the bank reconciliations continue to balance.

The Nationwide bank account is now closed and the balance was paid into Unity Trust Bank. It took a remarkable amount of time, effort and repetition to complete this matter, finally concluded by the Chairman and a previous Councillor on 16th March 2018.

The opening balance was £72,231.27 and the approved precept for the year was £44,401.00. Additional income brought the total to £46,539.59. Expenditure was £58,561.65 and so the operating loss was £12,022.06. The churchyard repairs were £15,540 and, at present, no further major expenditure is anticipated.

The closing cash balance is £62,207.68 (of which £4,054.92 is held in the reserve account). Cheques not yet cashed amount to £1,997.97 and so the actual balance to carry forward to 2018/19 is £60,209.71. Again, please note that these figures are subject to change in the audit.

We are in the process of enabling internet banking. The Clerk will have 'view and submit' authority, meaning that she can review the accounts and submit items for online payment. However, these will not be processed until authorised online separately by two Councillors. The Councillors may 'view and authorise' but are not able to submit items for payment. These measures are standard practice to minimise the risk of fraud.

The target cash reserve remains between £55,000 and £65,000. Healthy reserves provide a cushion against unexpected costs (such as the churchyard wall problems of the last year) as well as enabling the Parish Council to promote and deliver projects for the benefit of Bleadon residents.

No questions were asked.

CORONATION HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Steve Hartree is the Parish Council's representative on the Committee and presented his report as follows:

The Committee met on a regular basis over the past year; Les Masters was elected as Chair, with Kevin Barrett as an excellent Secretary and Ian Gibson as an efficient Treasurer.

Hire charges are kept under review, and bookings are constant. Jo Jones retired as Booking Officer and Kate James has taken her place. The Community Payback squad worked to clear some overgrown areas around the hall and are willing to undertake similar work in the future.

The Management Committee propose to appoint a hall caretaker and, subject to finance being obtained, plan to refurbish the hall kitchen.

In conjunction with the Parish Council, the Committee will be introducing a one-way system in the car park and constructing a new pedestrian entrance and path on the west side of the hall grounds.

The Management Committee finances are in good order despite the substantial costs involved in the hall improvements.

Tribute must be paid to the excellent and most efficient work of Kevin Barrett and Ian Gibson and to the enthusiasm of the members of the Hall Management Committee.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS AND FUNDING

Nigel Cooper from Claverham Future gave a clear and broad summary of the thoughts, processes and actions that Claverham had gone through in order to complete their Neighbourhood Plan. His powerpoint presentation is appended to these minutes. Key points:

What can the Plan do? It can prevent inappropriate development. NSC's Core Strategy CS33 applies to Bleadon as an infill village – development has to be appropriate to the scale and needs of the existing village. Community Infrastructure Levy – 25% is available if you have a Plan, 15% if not. The Plan remains 'in date' for two years even if NSC policies change. It carries 'weight' in any planning decision or appeal (whereas a Parish Plan or Character Statement does not). If you make a plan and it is approved in a referendum then NSC MUST take it into account.

What can't it do? It is not about traffic regulation – but if included as part of the overall need in the plan the elements gain 'weight'. It can't override National Planning Policy Framework, Joint Spatial Strategy or Local Plan/Core Strategy.

What are the costs? Much of the work can be done by keen volunteers. Claverham spent £4106.35, covered by a grant. £9k is available this year, plus £8k for specialists if required for housing/site studies.

People do things, not committees! .

You need the support and views of the wider community. Determine what is possible, make a list of actions and people to undertake them, plan the timetable. Record all responses – a Community Involvement Statement is required. Evidence documents are part of the Plan.

Contacts at NSC planning department are key as there is a lot of policy information you will need to include. The Plan starts to gain weight as it is prepared and NSC starts to take account of it.

Some housing MUST be included. It is impractical to pretend that there is no need now and never will be – developers will win that argument easily. Allocating an appropriate amount of housing for the village and determining appropriate sites in the interest of the community will give much better protection against inappropriate development than a blanket "ban".

The Chairman thanked Nigel for his excellent presentation and asked for questions, summarised below.

Q – How long was the process for Claverham?

A – It took three years – but could have been 18 months if they had been more aware of the timing of NSC decision-making.

Q – Can you give us the alternative view? We don't want housing.

A – You need only a small number – say 10. If there is no housing in the Plan then there is no base-line and a developer will attempt any number. If you have made a small allowance then NSC has authority to refuse.

Q – Who pays for defending at appeal?

A – NSC because they are defending their decision (Chairman stated that this was confirmed by Cllr Porter and the CEO at NSC when asked the question recently).

Q – Did Nigel's own company 'gift' expertise? Did it provide expert advice at little or no cost?

A – We had some input from experts such as an ecologist but it was the residents who came forward to do the work. Every community has a range of skills and expertise. The new Neighbourhood Planning funding scheme has two elements - £9k basic plus £8k if you are allocating housing – and an additional Technical Support grant for professional advice and research.

Q – I asked Hutton and Locking Parish Councils if they were going through with Plans. Hutton said no. Locking was considering it and had prepared a consultation. I see the Plan as an invitation to build.

A – The pros and cons list that Locking prepared was sent to me. I consider some points to be correct and others not quite so. I'll prepare a document for you.

Q – Did Claverham have a Parish Plan? Did you use it?

A – Yes, and it was a good place to start. A lot of views and things of importance were the same but others had changed.

Submitting an Expression of Interest for Plan funding is a window of opportunity. No commitment until full application made.

Q – If it takes three years to prepare but has only two years protection, what's the point?

A – If you make some housing allowance then everything you say is upheld for two years. If no housing then appeals are more likely and the Plan has less weight. It's not foolproof.

Q – You had the scapegoat of a brownfield site in Claverham. What if Bleadon said no housing?

A – It is still a Neighbourhood Plan but does not have as strong protection in planning policy as it would with a small allocation.

Q – Bleadon has around 500 homes and there are applications for 200 more – too many!

A – Claverham Developments bought fields then sought planning permission. We fought them while we completed the Plan.

Q – A previous Councillor did some work on a Plan – is it still available? Is the Parish Council keen to support a Plan?

A – The Council is keen to support the process and the councillor is happy to join a residents' group and provide the information.

Q – Even if prepared, does the Plan still need 50% of the electorate to agree?

A – It needs a simple majority – once the Plan is prepared it goes to a formal referendum and needs 51% of the votes to be adopted.

Q – If it takes 2-3 years it can't stop the development on our fields?

A – True – you are coming from behind but the Plan gains weight even before it is approved and it is there for the next development that is proposed. You could have a 'simple' plan rather than one with everything in it. You can add to it later with amendments but these have to be in the nature of the plan or else it must go to referendum again.

Q – What's to stop a developer coming in after the two years?

A – Nothing – and national or local policy could change. However, a side effect of the process is that the community gains the knowledge and skills to engage better on future planning matters.

Q – If Developer A and Farmer B each want to develop their own site then who says which of them gets developed?

A – The village Settlement Boundary can be changed by a Plan. NSC are thinking of reviewing them. The spatial strategy has suggested large lumps of housing but I believe nothing for Bleadon.

Chairman: The Joint Spatial Plan goes to NDC Full Council on 10th April. The Parish Council has a working relationship with Planning Officers and will discuss it further.

Q – Why can't we have the opposite view presented? Jo Gower Crane has a lot of information about this.

A – More appropriate to have a Parish Council that has decided against it. However, we have been unable to find a Planning Officer or other council representative to date.

Q – Why not pay for an independent consultant?

A – This can be put to the next Parish Council meeting for a decision.

Q – We do not have enough information. We should not have a vote now but should wait until we know more about the opposite viewpoint.

A – The vote on the Resolutions before the meeting will go ahead. Attendees are free to vote for or against the Resolutions.

The Chairman gave a vote of thanks to Nigel Cooper for a stimulating and informative talk and presented him with a bottle of wine (at no cost to the Parish Council).

OPEN FORUM

Resolution 1: The electors present at this meeting seek the continuing support of the Parish Council to sort out the A370/Bridge Road junction.

Comment – Lorries are a nightmare. This week there was one from Loxton which had to go on to the A370 to turn in order to go back along Bridge Road and into Marshalls. Two other lorries at the same time had to reverse and manoeuvre in order for the first lorry to do this.

Q – Is there a proposal for a traffic island for pedestrians to cross?

A – Yes, it is in NSC's highway improvement plan but there are over 400 on the list. Marshalls are willing to provide materials and the Parish Council can also contribute. The more we contribute, the higher up the list this scheme will go. A ball-park figure of £20,000 has been mentioned.

Resolution 1 was **CARRIED** by a show of hands with none against.

Resolution 2: The electors present at this meeting support Bleadon Parish Council continuing to pursue the Neighbourhood Plan process to the point of a referendum.

Resolution 2 was **CARRIED** by a show of hands with none against.

CLOSING REMARKS

A resident asked the meeting how many had attended due to a notice put through their door by the Bleadon Action Group. A show of hands suggested it was about 50% of those present.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions to the discussion. Next year's meeting will take place after the Parish Council Elections.

The meeting closed at 8.47pm