

STARTING POINT May 2016: Jo accepted an offer to be part of the Bleadon Parish Council's Newsletter Working Group to create the first newsletter under the newly appoint Chair. There were no physical or virtual meetings to discuss the name, format, content, draft version, etc. There were no timescales or deadlines communicated. There was no receipt of the final published version until over a week after it had been distributed to all other Bleadon residents. This was despite personal non-BPC conversations over the whole period. On expressing disappointment at this treatment to the councillor concerned, aspects of the email were incorrectly and publicly raised as a complaint by BPC. These were then discussed with members of the public before responding to the content of the email. A meeting was subsequently held with BOB, the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Clerk in attendance which raised a number of further issues to be addressed as indicated below.

From: Jo Gower-Crane

To: parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Cc: Cllr Gutsell; Cllr Clarke; BleadonBOB Home

Subject: BOB & BPC Amicable Working

Sent: 17 August 2016 19:44

Hi Tony,

It was good to put a name to a face at our recent meeting 5 August 2016 and discuss things with you and councillors outside of a public meeting. As a follow-up to our meeting, and as you mentioned you would be responsible for updating the Parish Council website in the near future, we politely ask that you/BPC answer the attached questions.

In trying to review and understand the outstanding questions and issues, some of which have been outstanding since last October 2015, I've created the attached review and discussion paper which corresponds to seven main issues.

1. BPC categorization of online service providers
2. BPC/Other websites
3. BPC Content
4. BPC Newsletter
5. Ratification of minutes
6. Public correction of minutes
7. Complaints procedure

One of the key points is if BPC want to work amicably with BOB what does that actually mean, how does BPC envisage that happening and when? [NB: These questions were never answered with BPC later resolving to implement their draft vexatious policy in Feb 2017]

Hopefully you can assist BPC in answering the main underlined questions in bold with the support of the associated background and context as to why I/we/BOB would like them answered. I've also attached our original and resubmitted complaint with BPC's response to the paragraphs for reference as best as I can.

As always if you or councilors would like to discuss any of the above please feel free to contact me.

Kind regards,

Jo

REVIEW & DISCUSSION PAPER OF BPC COMMUNICATIONS WITH BOB

BACKGROUND

In trying to review and understand the outstanding questions and issues, some of which have been outstanding since last October 2015, I've created the attached review and discussion paper which corresponds to seven main issues:

1. BPC categorization of online service providers
2. BPC/Other websites
3. BPC Content
4. BPC Newsletter
5. Ratification of minutes
6. Public correction of minutes
7. Complaints procedure

One of the key points is if BPC want to work amicably with BOB what does that actually mean, and how does BPC envisage that happening?

To help shorten this review paper I have underlined the sections of questions for your convenience, so **if you don't want background or context just read the underlined bits**. We all need to resolve these issues ASAP so assistance in this matter would be greatly appreciated. I don't feel that the questions should be too onerous considering Section 1 (S1), S2 & S3 relate to the recently redesigned and launched website; S4 the recently renamed newsletter with newly appointed editor; and S5, S6 & S7 BPC processes and procedures which were also recently reviewed. I feel that to date the communications from BPC have been confusing and somewhat contradictory so help clarifying the issues below would be very welcome. I have tried to make each section self contained so some repetition may appear as they are somewhat inter-related.

It is clear from our recent meeting 5 August 2016, and BPC response to our complaint that it believes all our previous questions have been answered, that is not the case from our perspective. This is especially so in relation to how BPC and the BOB websites can work or exist together without duplication or confusion within the community. Over the years BPC has repeatedly stated, publicly and privately, that it wants to work amicably with BOB but has never discussed how it envisages this happening. The community website bleadon.org.uk was in existence before BPC developed it's first one (it's now on its third). We have repeatedly offered to work with BPC to address all our concerns in order to work together to avoid duplication of time, money and effort but to no avail.

The problem is compounded by different configurations of councillors stating our queries relate to the past and we should all move on, as was mentioned again at our meeting. Yes, they do relate to the past because they have never been answered but also they shape the future. A quick review of the last 10 months in relation to the BPC website also shows this: October 2015, prior to the new BPC website launch, we had one meeting at BPC request to discuss our relationship, with no feedback. January 2016, following BPC launch, we write to BPC ask what our relationship would be, no response, except for negative public statements at council meetings. April 2016, in answer to our complaint we're informed we should have been updated, but no clarification to date. We are told our emails are too long; they originally start out as simple one liner questions but end up long like this one as no contextual conversations are had, so we feel we have to explain the background, context and timing in email in order to try and get an answer e.g. The original two questions last October that started all the BPC public comments were roughly 'Please can you send us the October minutes as usual' and 'How do BPC intend to work with BOB?'. I feel that this paper goes some way towards showing what happened next from our/BOB perspective.

We appear to again be at the stage where BPC has a new clerk who is about to update an outdated BPC website. So from our perspective this appears a case of déjà vu, in the present not the past, not historic. So, feeling at risk of being ignored, told my correspondence is too long or our names and Bleadon BOB being raised negatively in a public meeting I'll try to communicate with BPC again.

From: Bleadon Parish Council Clerk <parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Sent: 22 August 2016 10:16

To: Jo Gower-Crane

Subject: BOB & BPC Amicable Working

Hello Jo,

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

I am addressing this response Jo Gower-Crane solely, however I assume that the term 'Bleadon Bob' relates to Chris Butler and Jo Crane-Gower, and so my response is sent to all parties.

I have discussed your recent email with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Parish Council, and have sought advice from SLCC for the best way to respond to the issues you have raised.

On a personal level, I was surprised to receive your email. I left the meeting with you on 5th August with the impression that we had a working agreement for the way forward. I agreed to forward to you all agendas and minutes, and any other non-confidential emails received and I thought that this was the 'way forward' we had agreed.

The advice that I have been given from the SLCC is that I should respond to each of your questions, but that the Parish Council should not enter into any further correspondence regarding the issues that you have raised. A part time Parish Clerk, and elected Councillors who give their time voluntarily, simply do not have time to deal with complicated requests such as this. I will respond to any unrelated correspondence received from you in the future. [NB: Councillors are not volunteers that are elected representatives. We do not consider the following questions to be complicated requests for a parish council that has processes and procedures in place; has recently relaunched their website; and has recently formed a working group to relaunch its newsletter]

S1. BPC CATEGORISATION OF ONLINE SERVICE PROVIDERS: BPC communications indicate that it doesn't see us as members of the public delivering an online community service via website; or as a group; or as a business. So how does it see/categorise BOB and its role in Bleadon?

How BPC intends to work with BOB, and how it treats it and us in relation to other members of the 'public', needs to be clarified. For instance BPC doesn't appear to see BOB as a member of the public (complaint refusal and subsequent response);

- 9 Feb 16 BPC complaint rejection: "we cannot recognise the complaint as it has currently been submitted as it has come in an email with the heading Bleadon BOB and therefore has not come from an individual parishioner or group of parishioners."
- 7 Apr 16 BPC complaint response: That a complaint should be from members of the public. In order to facilitate the conclusion of this matter, BPC is willing to set this concern aside.

or as a group (complaint refusal, reason for exclusion from newsletter);

- 9 Feb 16 BPC complaint rejection: "we cannot recognise the complaint as it has currently been submitted as it has come in an email with the heading Bleadon BOB and therefore has not come from an individual parishioner or group of parishioners."
- 5 Aug 16 BPC state that BOB was not included in the recent newsletter as it is not a group that meets physically

or a business (removal from communications email of public information, exclusion from newsletter in relation to services offered to Bleadon).

So how does it see BOB, and how does it intend to work with us to the benefit of Bleadon residents and the public purse.

From Oct 15 to May 16 the clerk, in full knowledge of BPC, removed BOB from the communications email group that we'd been on for over two years along with private and public sector service providers; our correspondence was ignored; and BPC created a bad public image of BOB. During this time minutes, etc. were created and sent to councillors, and as far as we're aware also received by attending members of the public in paper form, and recipients of the BPC correspondence email

group in electronic form. For some still unexplained reason they were not given to us either as members of the public or BOB but the email service continued with other private and public service providers. In January the clerk added BOB back into communications email group when telling certain public and private service providers of the BPC website launch (presumably to indirectly use our contact list to inform Bleadon residents). Immediately afterwards BOB was removed again from the communications email group and didn't receive any communications, minutes, agenda, etc. via the clerk. So from my perspective it could be perceived as BPC using BOB and its contacts to inform the public whilst publicly impying non-cooperation, not treating us equally, and continuing to create a bad image of BOB in public meetings and minutes. In February BPC held a closed Extraordinary meeting publicly stating:

- 4 Feb 16 BPC Extraordinary meeting: To consider the on-going relationship between the Council and a parishioner

The outcome of which was publicly stated and minuted as relating to BOB:

- 8 Feb 16 BPC meeting/minutes "It is this council's opinion that to serve the whole of the parish of Bleadon that it treats Bleadon Bob in the same manner as any parishioner of Bleadon in making available via the parish council website information which is available under law to parishioners within due time. The Parish Council further wishes to draw to the attention of Bleadon Bob, the amount of time spent by the Parish Council Clerk in responding to Bleadon Bob's requests"

Why BPC had to declare a closed EM about a parishioner (us) with this publicly declared negative outcome towards BOB we still don't know. We/BOB had only asked to receive public information in the first place; to receive it at the same time as other private and public sector service providers; and as we had done for the previous two years.

In Feb 16 BPC minuted thanks to BOB for its services but dropped BOB from its communications email group:

- 8 Feb 16 BPC meeting/minutes: Cllr Findlay suggested that the letter also contain the council's thanks for the previous posting of the minutes and agendas on the Bleadon Bob website whilst the council was waiting for the setting up of its new website; further that due to personal and administration reasons, the minutes for November and December were delayed and that the parish council apologised for any inconvenience caused.

In practice the outcome was the removal of a BPC service which I believe resulted in us/BOB and residents of Bleadon getting a lesser, different service to that of the public and private sector service providers, being told to repeatedly check the website instead of being directly informed (even though it's residents pay and are affected by the decisions minuted). As far as we can tell the minutes were not delayed as they were created and distributed in various forms to councillors and various members of the public as described above. From my perspective we/BOB/public were treated differently to private and public sector service providers which also seems at odds with BPC Corporate Policy schedule.

The day after BPC declared that they'd treat BOB 'in the same manner as any parishioner of Bleadon' they confusingly rejected our complaint stating:

- 9 Feb 16 BPC complaint rejection: "we cannot recognise the complaint as it has currently been submitted as it has come in an email with the heading Bleadon BOB and therefore has not come from an individual parishioner or group of parishioners."

By April the clerk, who updated the website, along with two other councillors had resigned. By May BPC had its second Chair and a new configuration of councillors. BOB was added back again onto the communications email group enabling us, and BOB recipients, to directly receive minutes when they became available. So from my perspective it could be perceived as BPC using BOB with its contacts to inform the public but not treating us equally in terms of access to information.

BPC may consider the above access to information resolved as we/public/BOB have now been added back onto the email list but the private discussions surrounding our initial two questions, and the content of closed EM, appears to still be affecting BOB as an online community service provider as the newsletter issue below shows i.e. how BPC sees and treats BOB in relation to other public and private service providers. (See also related S2 & S3)

[Bleadon Parish Council considers you to be normal members of the community, who have no more or less right to information than any other Parishioner. Bleadon BOB is an independent website that you run.](#) [Then why do they treat us differently as indicated in this review paper?]

S2. BPC/OTHER WEBSITES: Will BPC please discuss with us how the BPC website will work in relation to Bleadon BOB? Does it recognise that Bleadon has a maintained community website, which has been in operation since before the original BPC website and therefore operate a model similar to Blagdon www.blagdonpc.org.uk and its related community website <https://blagdon.org/>; or will BPC act as a parish that only has one website and duplicate information already available on BOB and other websites?

This latter approach has proven not to work to date, leading to the third rewrite of the BPC website launched in January 2016 after a lack of maintenance for over two years. This was despite training for previous councillors and clerks, at cost to residents, both before, during and after Quality Status. High workload, leading to a lack of time to consistently update the site, have been mentioned by previous clerks and councillors responsible for website maintenance. BPC have already raised workload/time issues at our recent meeting, and time is yet to be spent working on the BPC website. BPC has declared publicly and privately that it wants to work with us but with no indication of how it intends to do this to date:

- Oct 15 BPC minutes: "the Council would look at how the parish may work together with another website run by a parishioner"
- Oct 15 meeting with a councillor re: BPC website – no feedback to date.
- 10 Jan 16 no response to email from BOB re: BPC website
- 20 Jan 16 meeting with councillors re: BPC website – no feedback to date.
- 7 Apr 16 complaint response – no answers re: BPC website included or subsequently given

So again, from our perspective this appears a case of déjà vu, in the present not the past or historic. Clear communication, openness and transparency will help all of us understand what BPC is trying to achieve and how it intends to operate with other individuals, groups and businesses within the community who have websites. (Also see related S1 & S3)

The Parish Council runs its own website, in which it passes on the information to the public that it considers appropriate to do so. I have taken advice from SLCC and their view is that the Parish Council cannot have a special relationship with any Parishioner. [NB: BOB has never asked for a 'special relationship' just for clarification of BPCs intentions from their meetings, minutes, also meetings and correspondence with BOB. As BPC had just relaunched its third website we had naturally presumed BPC had reviewed, discussed and decided the purpose of its website, its use and its relationship to existing websites and services in the community, as per government best practice guidelines, see S3.]

S3. BPC CONTENT: Will BPC focus on council generated information or will it seek to use public money to replicate services and content offered by BOB (e.g. directories, information re: Businesses, Clubs & Societies, Events/Groups, etc.) or anyone else that offers services online? How does the site design and content relate to the government guidance indicated below? As previously requested, please can you send us BPC documentation which we believe should be in existence and publicly available, e.g. in relation to the Government Service Design Manual or anything that may communicate to us and the public the purpose of the BPC website and how it intends to work with the community website, BOB.

We have repeatedly asked for clarity on this issue, asked for related information and raised concerns; a member of the public has already raised an IPR issue with BPC in relation to the new website. It is our understanding that parish councils should not seek to compete with the commercial market and spend public money replicating information that is already accessible in the public domain e.g. duplicating information that is already on BOB. So again, clear communication, openness and transparency will help all of us understand what BPC is trying to achieve and how it intends to operate with other individual, groups and businesses within the community and who they will need to approach to maintain their information. (See also related S1 & S2).

Please see the previous reply. I have taken advice from SLCC and their view is that the Parish Council have no obligations in regard to the Government Service Design Manual. I will be managing the website shortly, and as Clerk I will decide what information is published. Anything that I consider of interest will be published. As previously promised, I will forward any appropriate articles to you, or any other Parishioner who requests that information is passed to them. I will take advice from Councillors, and consider requests from the public for inclusion on the website when received. [NB: interesting to note that BPC puts private sector views above government best practice and that the view that Clerk will decide what information to publish and not our elected councillors.]

S4. BPC NEWSLETTER: Please can you confirm the purpose/aim of the BPC newsletter; under what circumstances a business, group, service provider, etc. (whether, online or otherwise), can submit an article or advert for free, and when they are requested to pay for it; and specifically in relation to BOB?

We have a similar ongoing issue with the BPC newsletter as we do with the website discussion. The newsletter has been published for decades. So surely there must be some BPC rules, policies, procedure, etc. with regards to submissions, costs, public relations, editorial responsibilities re: fairness, equality, inclusion, etc. especially as BPC previously spent so much time, money and effort becoming a Quality Council and recently appointed member of the public as editor.

The newsletter states:

- “Bleadon News is published by Bleadon Parish Council. Contributions to this magazine are very welcome, so long as they are about Bleadon, or can directly benefit its residents.” [NB: This was subsequently changed to “*We will consider any articles for publication, so long as ...*”]

BPC offered and printed free advertising for local businesses, clubs and societies that charge for their services but not BOB that offers its service free of charge. From our meeting BPC implied that BOB was treated differently to the others included in the newsletter as it was not seen as a group that meets physically. BOB does however offer a service to all members of the public/community, represents individuals and groups; a service that BPC “has relied on” for its own purposes for many years free of charge whilst paying its own web-service provider £30 a month to host outdated information. BOB was also contacted by BPC for information regarding printers and number of newsletters to print but not to be published as a service provider in the newsletter. I was asked to be involved in the working group but without any involvement with an apology given after again raising email content in a public forum, stating I had made a complaint.

I believe that it would benefit residents if BPC’s responsibility towards newsletter content was stated and clearly explain the role of the editor, especially in relation to its statement:

- “Unless otherwise stated the opinions and comments expressed in this publication, are those of the editor or contributor and may not be those of Bleadon Parish Council”.

Again, clear communication, openness and transparency will help all of us understand what BPC is trying to achieve and how it intends to operate with members of the community. I believe that this will also help guide any future working groups, and its Terms of Reference, towards achieving BPC aims for the newsletter. (See also related S1).

[The Parish Council publishes a newsletter for the benefit of the Community. Advertisements will be received, and reviewed by the producers of the newsletter, who will decide if any fee is to be paid for advertisements. The overriding ethic is that if a business is paid for the services they provide then there will be a charge for them to advertise in the newsletter. If it is a voluntary group, such as the Brownies, then there would normally be no fee. \[NB: Then why did some business whose services are paid for get free advertising and said in our meeting?\]](#)

[There is a clear distinction between advertisements and editorial content and any articles submitted for consideration may be subjected to editing at the discretion of the editor. If Bleadon BOB wishes to submit an article for consideration in the next newsletter then this will be considered for publication. \[NB: we did subsequently submit an article but the Chair and the current editor, who is the husband of the Chair, did not publish it as they wanted it rewritten in a chatty interview style which we felt would be misleading to the public by misrepresenting BPC’s relationship with us\]](#)

S5. RATIFICATION OF MINUTES: [Please can you clarify the minute ratification process; if and how the public can ask for a draft minute to be amended/clarified beforehand particularly when they are personally named; and when the draft July 2016 minutes were ratified by council?](#)

My current understanding is that ratification doesn't occur until the following meeting, which for the full council would be September. Whilst I respectfully accept the new clerk’s explanation of why he included my name in the minutes, it's my understanding from previous communications that it is the councillors' responsibility to agree the accuracy, style and consistency of minutes. We are therefore disappointed with BPC's ratification of minute 286.15 in the prior knowledge that, in the way it was written, we felt that it didn't represent our concerns or queries regarding the newsletter; or the subsequent public discussion as explained in our recent meeting. We have always said that the name Village News appeared to exclude other residents of the parish, and that Parish News may be more appropriate (or Parish Council News as other PCs do) especially as the newsletter is financed and produced by BPC. [NB it was stated at the meeting that the minutes could not be changed as they had been ratified, hence the query].

Our concern was over the new name and its potential confusion or conflict with BOBs online presence e.g. Bleadon.org.uk/news, and whether full council were aware of our concern expressed to a councillor in relation to the two

names prior to the newsletter publication. Neither I or BOB received an explanation or response. In May I was invited and accepted as part of the working group to create and distribute the 'new style' newsletter; with the understanding that I would be part of the process when topics such as name change, content and distribution were raised, discussed and agreed. We raised the naming issue in May, both verbally and in writing, but it was not taken and raised as a complaint by BPC in the June meeting. I wrote to a councillor in June mainly expressing disappointment and frustration following my exclusion from the newsletter process and in relation to previous communications with her which resulted in a public note of a complaint by BPC in the July minutes. If any of my communications were perceived as a complaint, I was not notified and BPC formal complaints procedure was not followed (which BPC were at pains to point out to us in our complaint correspondence in April 16). Also my correspondence was aired in public again before any response to me. I therefore feel that the July minute doesn't reflect the context above. It also implies that I didn't think a name change was required, when it was its potential conflicting name that was my/our concern:

- July 16 BPC meeting/minutes: "The Chair said that a complaint had been received from Jo Gower-Crane regarding the change of the name of the Parish Newsletter from Bleadon Village News to Bleadon News. Everyone present at the meeting agreed that the new name was more appropriate."

As I recall from conversations and our meeting, councillors agreed to the newsletter name change (Bleadon News), that they agreed there would be no confusion or conflict with BOB's online news (Bleadon.org.uk/news), and that the July minute represented a discussion between BPC and members of the public attending, confirming BPC opinion (although to us the timing of councillors agreement was uncertain). Surely the minute should at least reflect that discussion and outcome. Again, clear communication, openness and transparency will help all of us understand what BPC is trying to achieve and how it intends to operate and work with members of the community who are also trying to make Bleadon a better place to live in. (Also see related S6).

Minutes are agreed by Parish Councillors at the following meeting. The public cannot ask for a draft minute to be amended. The July minutes will be ratified at the next meeting in September. Any Councillor who was present at the July meeting can ask that the minutes are amended if they feel that they are not accurate. These have already been circulated to Councillors, and no amendments have been suggested to me at present. [NB: this question was asked as we felt that the minute was inaccurate even from what BPC had told us had been spoken about at the public meeting. BPC also informed us at the meeting that the July minutes had already been ratified by councillors and could not be changed!]

S6. PUBLIC CORRECTION OF MINUTES: Please can BPC confirm how it informs the public of a differing outcome to that minuted; include/communicate missing information; or communicate that an apology of its minuted public behaviour towards a member of the public or service provider has been given? Please can BPC publicly rectify the poor public image it has portrayed of us and the community website BOB over the last 10 months? Can previous minutes, including minute 286.15, be amended in light of this paper?

In October 15 we asked BPC why public information was not being sent to us. Instead of sending us the information as it had done for over two years (whether as members of the public or BOB) it resulted in negative BPC public discussions as minuted in the Dec 15, Jan 16, Feb 16 meeting and minutes. The only way to receive minutes/agenda/etc up until January 16 was directly from BPC via email (as the existing BPC website was not being updated and the new one wasn't live); via BOB (which BPC 'relied on' for over two years due to BPC website issues); or to attend public meetings and pick up a printed copy. In April an apology about how it handled our request for public information was given to us:

- 7 Apr 16 BPC complaint response: "BPC is aware that the earlier debate regarding the publication of draft minutes was not handled as well as it could have been. BPC has apologised for this in the email dated 29.02.16 written by the Clerk". (NB the 1 Apr 16 email was not received, a hand delivered letter dated 7 Apr 16 containing the response was received, after resignation of a councilor and the clerk)
- 29 Feb 16 clerk apology: "I have also been asked to convey the parish council's thanks for your past support in posting minutes and agendas on the Bleadon Bob website whilst the new parish council website was being set up and explain that due to administrative and personal circumstances, the minutes for November and December were delayed and the council wishes to apologise for any inconvenience caused. Once again, your generous past support in the posting of minutes and agendas is acknowledged by Bleadon Parish Council" (NB the 29 Feb 16 email was not received a photocopied letter was subsequently received).

With the new configuration of BPC we tried to 'move on' but the above didn't really explain why BPC, individually as councillors or a group, didn't send information to us yet, as far as we're aware, councillors were still receiving electronic minutes to ratify; others public groups such as N. Somerset Council, the police and businesses such as The Mercury still received the information; attending public received paper copies. As it stands BPC has not painted BOB in a good light when

all we did was ask to continue to receive public information. How are the public informed of BPC's reflection and apology? I also feel that minute 286.15 is incorrect and continues to put BOB in a bad light for reasons indicated in S5; as was mentioned in our meeting the public are now very aware of who is involved in running BOB.

- July 16 meeting/minutes: "The Chair said that a complaint had been received from Jo Gower-Crane regarding the change of the name of the Parish Newsletter from Bleadon Village News to Bleadon News. Everyone present at the meeting agreed that the new name was more appropriate."

Minutes can be amended as seen in the Oct 15 minutes so why not those relating to us and others to correctly reflect communications to the public?

- Oct 15 meeting/minutes: "Resolved that Minutes of the Meeting of Bleadon Parish Council that was held on Monday 14th September 2015 as previously circulated be taken as read with the following corrections: "Darting Glass Vase" should read Dartington; the PCSO report had been received; the details regarding the questions to Mr Fowler not be included unless the questions relating to other prospective councilors also be included;.."

Other examples: Oct 15 minutes putting a councilor in a bad light, yet as far as I'm aware this was not rectified with a minute update/correction at a later date after a public statement by the then Chair. Oct 15 minute stated that BPC was going to move to Freeola but went live with Webglu in Jan 16. Feb 16 minutes indirectly stated the removal of a public service i.e. no public access to the communications email group; or the subsequent reactivation of the service for public inclusion with the new council configuration and new clerk. Some minutes and agenda are also missing financial and/or correspondence information, how is this subsequently rectified? Do members of the public have to submit individual requests for information? BPC may, over time, reflect on its actions, or change its mind over how it wants to undertake an action but how is that communicated to the public?

Councillors and clerks repeatedly say that if people want to know what's going on they should find time to physically attend BPC meetings, but only around 10 or so members of the public physically attend; including sometimes the press. BPC minutes on the other hand are posted on websites for the world to search and read, and are sent to 100s of BOB readers. So surely the public, especially those who live in our community who finance BPC and are affected by its comments and decisions should be kept informed. (Also see related S5).

I write the minutes, which are subsequently approved by the Councillors. I circulate draft minutes to Councillors ASAP after meetings, which are then published on our website. If Councillors wish to raise issues previously discussed then they are at liberty to do so during meetings, but they cannot normally change resolutions previously made. Minute 286.15 will be considered by the Councillors, at their next meeting. They can resolve to change it, if they consider it to be inaccurate. [NB: this does not answer how future minutes correct errors or amendments to previous decisions, resolutions or minutes. The accuracy of the July minutes was not addressed despite this communication stating that I had not made an official complaint. Nor did the minute indicate that I agreed that 'Village' News was not representative of the Parish as a whole, as discussed in conversations and correspondence with the Chair prior to her public discussion]

S7. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE: Please define who can and can't make a complaint about BPC actions and physically how? The initial complaint from BOB was rejected even though it was sent from two parishioners who run the community website, from an email address that BPC had been corresponding with for many years and on a monthly basis for over two years. [NB e.g. for receipt of mailing list minutes, agenda, etc.]

In Feb 16 BPC rejected our complaint stating:

- 9 Feb 16 BPC complaint rejection: "we cannot recognise the complaint as it has currently been submitted as it has come in an email with the heading Bleadon BOB and therefore has not come from an individual parishioner or group of parishioners."

After resubmitting BPC wrote in our complaint response:

- 7 Apr 16 BPC complaint response: "That a complaint should be from members of the public. In order to facilitate the conclusion of this matter, BPC is willing to set this concern aside."

Please can you clarify for all members of the public that offer services how they can submit a complaint, particularly if they are a business, sole trader, or members of the public offering a community service such as BOB. It appears from the

statement above only parishioners writing from a personal email address can complain and that service providers with non-personal email addresses are not included in the complaint process. For example, if the owner of a business had a complaint about how they and their business had been spoken about by BPC in public would their complaint be rejected too? If so, how could they officially complain? If not, why was BOB's complaint rejected as we are parishioners and a community service provider?

I have sought advice from NSC, who state that individual members of the public can make complaints regarding the actions of individual Parish Councillors, or the Parish Council as a body, to NSC. Any complaints against the Clerk should initially be made to the Parish Council. [NB: Then why was our complaint rejected as it was signed as members of the public; and BPC's Extra-ordinary meeting had declared that they would treat us as members of the public before it was submitted? The two councillors and clerk who were mainly involved in our complaint had resigned before we had received BPC's official response to our complaint. We therefore left the matter to let the new BPC members settle in]

GOVERNMENT REFERENCE MATERIAL:

- Government Design Guide for Public Sector Websites <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual> and <https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/as> prescribed here (in section 3.2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/naming-and-registering-government-websites/local-government-naming-and-registering-websites>
- Information Commissioners Office - Model Publication Scheme http://www.bleadon.org.uk/media/other/24400/parish_council_information_guide.pdf
- Department of Communities and Local Government - Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity <http://www.bleadon.org.uk/media/other/24400/DCLGCodeofPracticeLocalAuthorityPublicity1878324.pdf>

SUMMARY

It seems to me that although BPC has 'relied on' BOBs online service for many years it doesn't want to communicate with us as individuals acting as BOB and this paper only covers some of the last 10 months BPC correspondence. Successive councillors have declared that our issues/concerns are 'historical' but I disagree as seen by the July minutes. If BPC have made decisions regarding BOB they have not been clearly communicated to us and appear contradictory. How BPC has treated us to date, as individuals and BOB, communicating via public forums and minutes rather than discussing things with us first, is continuing to have a negative effect on us personally, on BOB as a service, on residents perception of BOB and BPC's own public image. How BPC intends to work with BOB, and how it treats it and us in relation to other members of the 'public', needs to be clarified.

We have tried to work amicably with BPC but it doesn't seem a reciprocal arrangement as questions still remain unanswered to help clarify how that can happen. I appreciate that BPC has a limited resource but I don't feel that the questions should be too onerous, especially considering the recently redesigned and launched website; recently renamed newsletter with newly appointed editor; and recent Corporate Policy review I also feel that the answers to the attached questions will also bring clarity for Bleadon residents with regards BPC intentions and approach to cooperative working with the community and the services that they deliver.

17 August 2016