

**Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting**  
Held on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 7:00pm  
In Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers

Cllr Evelyn Bloomfield

Cllr David Brinkley (Chair)

Cllr Rhea Gardner

Cllr Clive Lenton

Cllr Lynda Seagroatt

Cllr Mick Richardson (ESC)

David Riddleston (Playing Field Manager)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

4 members of the public were present

**1. Apologies for absence:**

**a. To receive apologies for absence.**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Heather Owen (illness).

**b. To accept apologies for absence.**

Acceptance of the apology of Cllr Owen was proposed by Cllr Gardner, seconded by Cllr Bloomfield and all were in agreement.

**2. To receive any:**

**a. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest.**

There were none.

**b. Declarations of Non-Pecuniary Interest.**

There were none.

**c. Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items.**

There were none.

**d. Declarations of Gifts or Hospitality received over the value of £25.00**

There were none.

**e. Notification of Lobbying with reference to Planning Applications to be discussed.**

There were none.

**3. Public Participation – To receive:**

i. Reports from County and District Councillors:

• Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulchay:

A report from Cllr Mulchay had been received shortly before the meeting and therefore Councillors had not yet had the opportunity to read it. This was the first communication received since October 2022.

• East Suffolk District Cllr Mick Richardson and Cllr Richard Kerry:

Cllrs' monthly reports as well as many informative updating emails on various subjects had been previously received and circulated by the Clerk. The Chair thanked Cllr Richardson for the great deal of time both he and Cllr Kerry devote to Bucklesham and for being a very accessible presence.

Chair's initials: .....

ii. Questions from any member of the public:

- A long discussion took place with regards to solutions for the issue to be discussed in item 6. Residents were thanked by the Chair for their attendance and their support.

**4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022:**

All Councillors agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Bloomfield proposed that the minutes should be signed, this was seconded by Cllr Lenton and all Councillors agreed.

The minutes had already been published on the website in draft form in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

**Action: Clerk**

**5. Clerk's Report – To receive updates on matters not requiring debate or decision:**

The Clerk's report had been previously circulated to all Councillors and much of its contents were on the Agenda, however some specific points were highlighted:

- i. The Clerk informed the Council that the poplar trees had all successfully been felled by Tom Lyon. Tom had very kindly delivered some of the chippings for use on the allotments following a request by a resident, and some to a resident of St Mary's Park. The larger tree trunks had been taken off site but a good amount of the smaller branches had been cut into logs for villagers to collect. The Parish Council had received a great deal of thanks from many villagers who benefited from this.
- ii. The Clerk had been notified by the East of England Ambulance Service that the defibrillator sited at the Village Hall had been temporarily registered as 'unavailable' after a member of the public had accessed it. Mark Scarff, who oversees the inspection of the defibrillator on behalf of the Council, had reported that it had been replaced the following day and the pads had been unused. The Clerk was then able to re-register the defibrillator as 'available' again.
- iii. Gary Bareham, the site Manager for the Castlemore Homes development on Levington Lane, met with some residents on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November. Questions were asked about the logistics of the works. The Clerk will ensure that all residents of the houses most affected will be notified of any further developments and Gary reassured everyone present that he will do his best to minimise the impact of the build where possible.
- iv. The Clerk informed the Council that she had passed the third Unit of the CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) qualification which was 'Finance for Local Councils'. She had attended further Networking Forums of other Clerks undertaking the qualification, which had been very helpful. These sessions are hosted by SALC and are very informative and enjoyable. The Clerk is currently working on the assignments for Unit 4 which is 'Management of the Council'.

**Action: Clerk**

**6. Playing Field:**

- a. To discuss the Council's approach to the Management of the Playing Field.

There had been a complaint to the Council with regards to a fifteen year old villager and his two friends being asked by the Clerk if they were residents as they had unlocked the goals and therefore knew the code. The child's parents had complained that they felt it was completely inappropriate for a stranger to question a minor about their identity. The Clerk had explained to the child's parents in writing the necessity for the identity of people using the goals to be confirmed. There is a policy that those under 18 years old using equipment on the Field must be accompanied by an adult. This would alleviate any anxiety over children being approached directly.

Some solutions to the issue of asking children if they live in the village were suggested, such as a permit to use the Field. However, this was deemed unworkable and unnecessary. Cllr Brinkley stated that the Clerk was completely justified in ascertaining if visitors to the Field were residents. It had been suggested by a member of the audience during Question Time that an article be written in the Bugle explaining to villagers that they may be approached and asked if they are a resident when using the Field. It was also suggested that the Clerk wear the Parish Council Hi Viz vest and a identification lanyard to reassure those she approached that she is operating in an official capacity.

As this had been the only complaint and many other villagers had supported the Council's management strategy of the Field, Cllr Brinkley proposed that no change be made to the procedures. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers with all in favour.

**Action: Clerk**

**7. Documentation:**

- a. To discuss and agree the amendments to the 'Equal Opportunities Policy' as previously sent to Councillors on 28/12/22.

The Equal Opportunities Policy had been amended to reflect nine 'Protected Characteristics'.

- b. To discuss and agree the 'Risk Management Policy' as previously sent to Councillors on 28/12/22.

This Policy had been presented to the Council as a necessary document following the Clerk's CiLCA training Unit 3 – Finance.

Cllr Gardner proposed that both policies be adopted. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers with all in favour.

**Action: Clerk**

**8. To discuss the arrangements for the elections in May 2023.**

With the forthcoming local elections due to take place on 4th May 2023, the Clerk explained the process to all Councillors as a reminder for those experienced with the protocol and information for the new members.

Councillors were reminded that they only serve a fixed four year term (May to May). The Clerk explained that on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2023, she would be attending a briefing on the elections due to take place in May 2023 and would have more information then. However, the usual process is that all Parish and Town Councillors are required to stand down and, if they wish, to stand for election again. The forms for registering will be out in February and there will be a fixed date by which they need to be returned to East Suffolk Council (ESC). The Clerk offered to collect the forms en masse and take them to ESC, but explained that Councillors wishing to stand again may take the forms in themselves if they wish. ESC check the forms to confirm if they have been completed correctly so it is prudent not to leave it until the last day, just in case there are issues and they need to be amended. If the form is not completed then current Councillors will not be active after the April meeting.

There are seven seats on Bucklesham Parish Council. If seven or fewer candidates stand and are eligible to be a Councillor and complete the form correctly, then all seven are automatically 'appointed' (candidates are still said to have been 'elected' even though an election has not actually taken place). If eight or more candidates stand, it will be necessary to have an election; which will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023. If there is an election the count will be on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May and the Clerk will be invited to observe. Once the votes are counted the seven candidates with the most votes will be declared and will become the Bucklesham Parish Councillors for the next four years (or until they resign or are no longer eligible to be a Councillor).

**Action: Clerk**

**9. To discuss the invitation to East Suffolk Community Partnership's 'Bringing Ideas To Life' Annual Forum on 03/03/2023:**

The Clerk had been contacted by East Suffolk Council with an invitation to a networking event 'Bringing Ideas to Life'. Cllr Gardner had attended last year and had found the sessions very helpful. Cllr Brinkley voiced that it would be appreciated if a Bucklesham Councillor was willing to represent the Council at the event again this year and Cllr Gardner willingly volunteered.

**Action: Clerk**

**10. Planning: To discuss the following planning applications received:**

- a. None received.

**11. Finance:**

- a. To review accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and review Bank Statements:

The accounts had been sent to all Councillors and there were no questions. Cllr Bloomfield was asked to sign and verify that the bank statements reflected the money held at the end of the month.

Chair's initials: .....

b. To review our Internal Accounting Procedures and the suitability of our Internal Auditor:

The Clerk had previously sent an email reminding Councillors that one of the annual tasks the Parish Council needs to complete is a review of our Internal Controls for dealing with financial matters and the efficiency of our Internal Audit.

**Financial Controls**

We have the following financial controls in place:

- Clerk checks invoice against estimate (where appropriate) and queries any differences
- Clerk draws cheque
- Two signatories see invoice and reconcile with cheque (then sign cheque, cheque stub and initial invoice)
- Bank reconciliation is produced at the end of every month and sent to Councillors
- A Councillor reviews the Bank Statements at each meeting (i.e. at least 6 times a year)
- Financial Regulations are in place and reviewed annually

**Efficiency of Internal Audit**

The Clerk recommended that the internal auditor we use (Mr Trevor Brown) is efficient and competent for the following reasons:

- He is a retired Clerk and is fully aware of the Parish Council accounting processes
- He is used by Heelis and Lodge, a local known and respected audit firm
- He was used by SALC to carry out their audits until he retired from this role three years ago
- He produces a list of documents and items he requires to complete the audit
- He monitors our Website regularly to check tasks have been completed (and alerts the Clerk if he can see a task not completed)
- He produces a written report for the audit and makes recommendations clear to the Council (see latest copy on our website)

**Appointment of Internal Auditor**

It was proposed by Cllr Lenton and seconded by Cllr Bickers that all procedures in place were adequate and that the Council continue to use the excellent services of Mr Brown. All were in favour.

In line with this, the Clerk informed the Council that she had once again been using the Year End Preparation Checklist, devised last year, in preparation for the audit. This had been circulated previously by email. It had proved very helpful as it had helped to avoid having several items on the agenda all at once as the Council had spread the necessary tasks throughout the year and had a few at each meeting.

c. To receive the Internal Control Statement for year ending 2021/22

This document had been previously sent to all Councillors. Cllr Brinkley proposed the Internal Control Statement be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Gardner and all were in favour.

- d. To discuss and agree quote from Norse for grass cutting of playing field in 2023 of £499.35 plus VAT.

The Clerk had once again compiled a list of cuts of the field during the year which had been 11 instead of the 8 that the Council had requested. Suffolk Coastal Norse had invoiced the Council for the 11 cuts. The Clerk was able to request a revised invoice reducing the cost to the £481.90 agreed. Cllr Lenton proposed that this year's quote of £499.35 for 8 cuts be accepted which was seconded by Cllr Bickers. All were in favour.

- e. To discuss and agree Budget for 2023/24.

The budget had been sent out previously and the Council debated at length the various funds allocated. Cllr Brinkley stated that he felt the planned expenditure was very cautious and that although the Budget was very well laid out and explained, there was very little room for unexpected expenditure. Cllr Brinkley suggested that the amount allocated for 'Admin' be increased as the Council had overspent in previous years from the budgeted amount. The Clerk had amended this to reflect the need. Cllr Brinkley proposed the Budget be agreed, this was seconded by Cllr Bickers and all were in favour.

- f. To discuss and agree Precept for 2023/24.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the necessity for a rise in the precept to cover the increased costs to the Council Budget this year. It was agreed that although the Parish Council manage the finances very well, and the Council were extremely mindful of the continued financial hardships that many were facing, it would be necessary to request an increase in the precept. This would likely mean an average increase of £2.00 per household per year. It was proposed by Cllr Brinkley that a figure of £9,800.00 be requested from East Suffolk Council for the precept. This was seconded by Cllr Bickers with five in favour and one vote against.

- g. To note payments made since last meeting:

i.	Clive Lenton (Maintenance)	£38.90
ii.	Daniel Burrows (Removal of fence on Field)	£480.00
iii.	Ruth Johnson (Clerk's Salary and expenses Oct, Nov, Dec)	£1,173.10
iv.	HMRC (Clerk's PAYE)	£273.80
v.	Tom Lyon Tree Services (Tree felling on Field)	£4,920.00
vi.	Suffolk Coastal Norse (Grass cutting on Field)	£578.28
vii.	Print 4 U (New Year Bugles)	£96.00

- h. To authorise the following payments:

i.	SALC (Clerk's CiLCA Training)	£132.00
ii.	Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall (Hall Hire)	£200.00
iii.	Suffolk.Cloud (website hosting)	£150.00

i. To note payments received since last meeting:

i. None £0.00

j. To note bank balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022:

i. Current Account (No. 80152285) £3,341.70  
ii. Savings Account (No. 00605875) £4,257.35

Cllr Brinkley proposed that finance matters ‘g’ to ‘j’ were accepted, seconded by Cllr Seagroatt with all in favour.

**Action: Clerk**

**12. To receive agenda items for next meeting on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023:**

Cllr Lenton requested that the project of a trampoline on the Playing Field be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

There were no other agenda items at the meeting from the Councillors, but the Clerk reminded them that all projects going forward would be included and that any new items should be notified to her at least one week before the meeting.

**Action: Clerk**

The meeting closed at 8:25 pm.

Signed: .....  
Chair

Date: .....

*Ruth Johnson*  
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair’s initials: .....